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NOVEMBER 2024 • Vol.60/No.11

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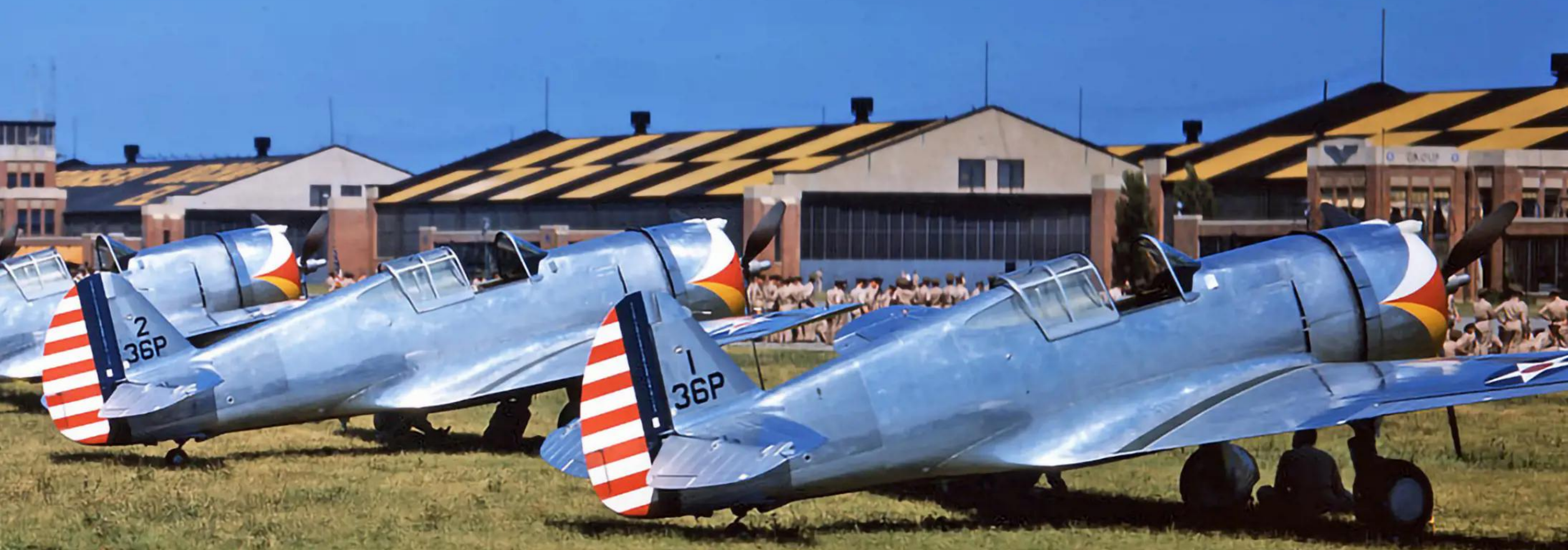
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COVER: Classic photograph of a teenage Flying Fortress crewman and his aircraft. (USAAF)

THESE PAGES: Curtiss P-36 fighters from the 36th Pursuit Group form a formidable line-up of Air Corps airpower during 1940 at Langley Field while the aircraft and men of the unit receive an official inspection. (USAAF)





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MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER

In today's world, it seems that nothing can be done without a certain amount of negativity thrown in by people opposed to whatever the particular activity. I have been watching the fiasco over the Toronto Airshow that took place in early September. Over the past few years, this venerable event has come under increasing attack by forces that want the show completely banned. Who are the folks that are protesting the event with such a great deal of hatred? It is difficult to tell, but it seems many are professional protesters that lead a nomadic lifestyle and travel from protest to protest. As far as we can tell, most of the complaining in Toronto itself is coming from third and fourth world people that the current Canadian government is letting pour into the country. They call these individuals "New Canadians." Well, it seems that the New Canadians are not big fans of airshows.

The protesters state that the Toronto Airshow is causing lots of anxiety among New Canadians because the shows remind them of "being back home." However, they need to be reminded that they are not being bombed by the planes flying in the show like they were "back home." In fact, the military aircraft being displayed actually allowed for these individuals to come to Canada where they are given complete access without being checked for terrorism, money, housing, medical care, food, etc. But they don't seem to get it. Many of the protesters are Palestinian and they were somehow connecting the fact that their former chunk of desert is now being converted to rubble with the planes flown in the show.

Part of the protesters were from a "green" group outraged by the amount of fuel used by the displaying aircraft along with the attendant noise factor. They state the warplanes were ruining the environment while also enriching companies such as Lockheed and Boeing. The current mayor of Toronto is a complete whack-job whose biggest claim to fame is that she got the 911 emergency response service to "speak 240 languages." She is also sympathetic to getting rid of the airshow and we must remember that there are those in the Canadian government that want to do away with the Royal Canadian Air Force along with the nation's other military branches. I guess they expect the United States to defend them in case something goes horribly wrong.

Before and during the airshow weekend, protesters were out in force waving signs, screaming and yelling, and pounding on drums. Apparently that sort of noise is okay. They got quite a bit of news coverage and advanced their cause on social media.

The protesters did not stop the Toronto Airshow this year, nor will they stop it next year. However, this sort of anti-airshow sentiment is growing and these people may eventually prevail if we do not take action. I recall attending the Geneseo Airshow back in the "old days" when the grass airfield was filled with dozens and dozens of beautiful Warbirds. Geneseo is also a college town and every morning we drove down the two-lane road to the airfield and it was lined with protesters — many being teachers at the school — waving the usual signs, denouncing the flying of warplanes, and yelling slogans while banging on drums (this banging thing seems to be a part of every aviation protest). They never closed down the show and most people driving past gave them a one-finger salute but the event did eventually fall apart due to its own mismanagement. So, if you enjoy airshows and the aircraft displayed at them, and you obviously do because you would not be reading *Air Classics*, then you need to stand up and support these events. Airshows are an endangered species and we must protect them.

In this month's "Warbird & Classic Report" Doug Fisher has a disturbing news item concerning the Dutch Dakota Association (DDA). The DDA has been safely operating an historic C-47 for

decades but they have now shut down their passenger-carrying flights. The reasons for this action are numerous and all are of concern to the vintage aviation community.

According to the DDA, the European Union will not allow 100LL to be used beginning in 2025. How they hope to create this ban is unclear because there is no satisfactory fuel available for replacing 100LL — especially in large piston engines. Several companies are working on a 100LL replacement but several have also dropped out, stating that the time and cost to develop such a fuel is not worth the return. In Europe, general aviation is very tightly regulated and we are sure that some countries would like to get rid of GA completely. The cost of 100LL is much higher in the United Kingdom (no longer a part of the EU) and Europe but the main concern here is safety. How will new fuels operate in the engines and how will they interact with rubber and other parts? How will they degrade the power settings of the big pistons? All of this is unclear.

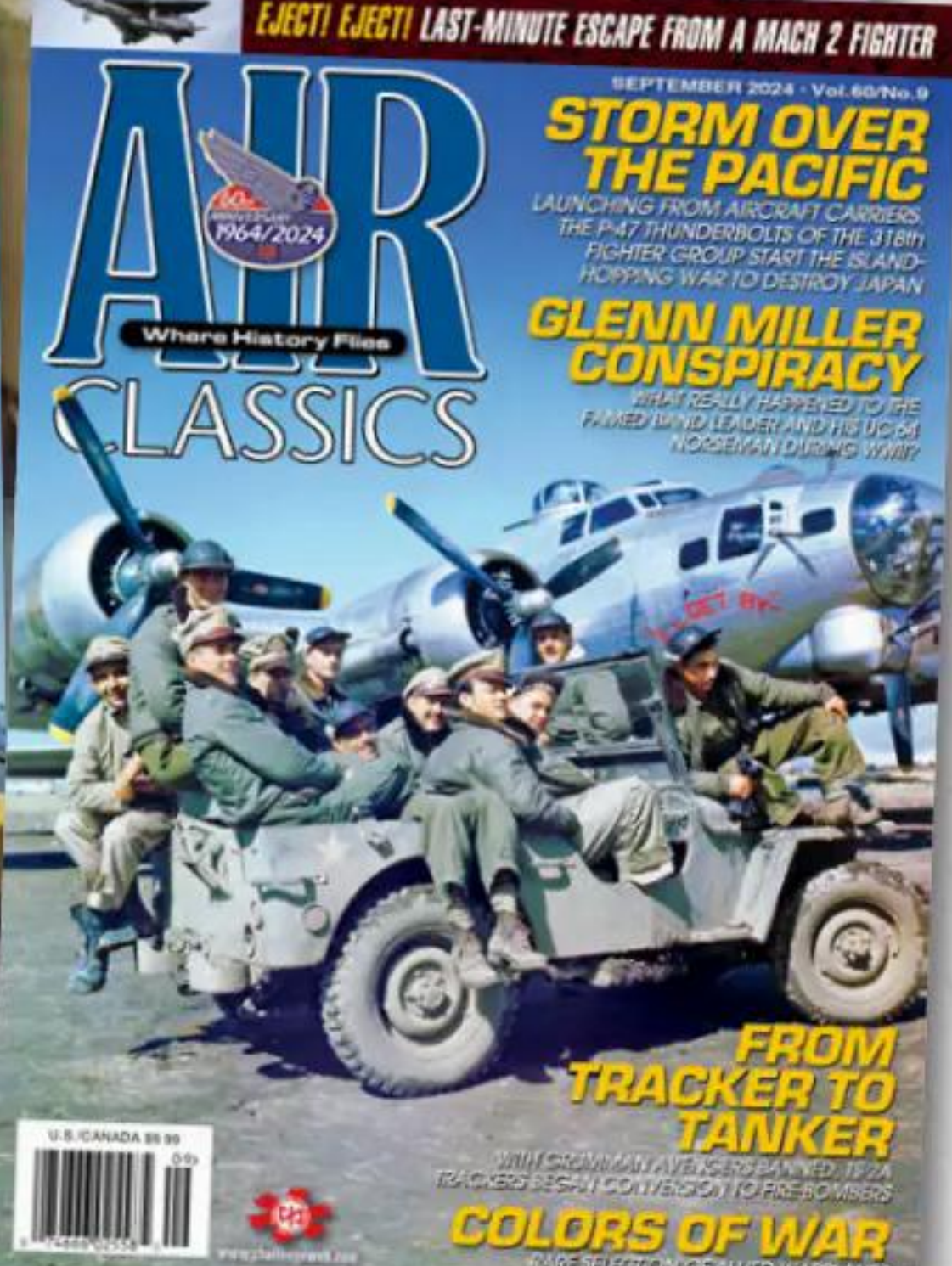
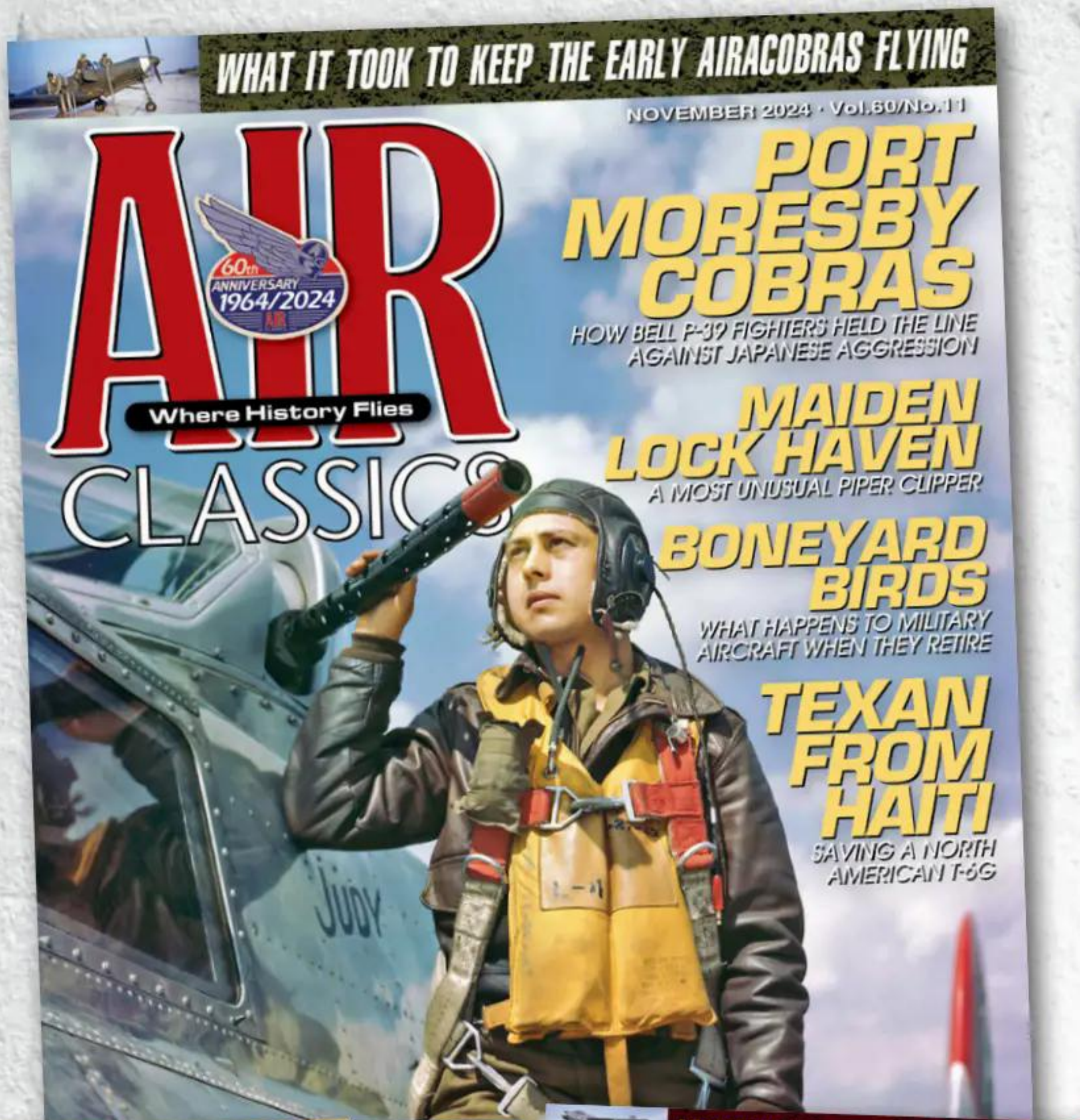
Another factor DDA notes in shutting off passenger operations is that many airports have increased their landing fees. We are seeing the same thing happen in the USA, where airports are raising landing fees past affordability for many GA operators — especially training schools. Then, certain European airports have banned the operation of the C-47. The reasons given include the fact that the C-47 makes too much "noise" and that people are "complaining" when an aircraft burning 100LL flies over their dwellings. The last reason seems more than a bit spurious. The average European would not even be able to identify a C-47 much less equate the fact that the two engines are burning 100LL. When it comes to noise, I guess these airfields would rather have the roar of jet airliners and business jets compared to the mellow sound of the Gooney Bird's radial engines.

Perhaps the most distressing reason given by the DDA is the fact that their organization is aging rapidly and that new and younger people are just not stepping up to the plate. Through the aging process, DDA states that the "tribal knowledge" of maintaining and flying the C-47 is fast disappearing. They are completely correct on this account. In the USA, we are also seeing aviation age quite rapidly. There is just little interest from the younger generation in "going to the airport." I imagine all of us can recall the thrill of when we were first able to go to airfields and see the planes we love in operation. Today, that is just not happening. It seems the younger generation would rather deepen their relationship with their phone.

It is up to all of us to aid in teaching younger people about aviation. Once they understand the thrill and importance of the subject, then they might become hooked for life. The EAA has their Young Eagles program while other institutions also have ways of getting people into aviation. When it comes to historic aviation, there are few better ways than giving an *Air Classics* gift subscription to a younger person that shows some interest. As you can see on the next page, we offer a lower-priced gift subscription and this is also ideal since we are nearing the holiday season. Each gift subscription comes with a card that has the giver's name. By giving an *Air Classics* gift subscription, a young person will get a magazine every month comprising a total of 1200 pages and 2500 photos and that should inspire anyone with a beginning interest in aviation history. Think about it. We need to do something to keep aviation history alive and vital.

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A photograph of a Javelin fighter jet, XA553, on display at the Ministry of Aviation. The aircraft is a light blue-grey color with a dark blue nose cone and a large black air intake on the side of the fuselage. It features a large, swept-back delta wing and a T-tail. The tail fin is painted with the French tricolor (blue, white, and red). The aircraft is parked on a paved surface in front of a large green hangar. A red car is visible in the background. The aircraft is marked with the number 'XA553' and a roundel insignia on the nose.



A red Jaguar XJ6 is parked in front of a silver Jaguar XJ6 race car. The silver car has 'ZU-BEX' and 'XS 451' written on its side, and a small Italian flag on its tail fin. The background is a clear blue sky with some clouds.

A large pile of twisted metal wreckage, likely from a vehicle, sits in a grassy field. In the background, a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire runs across the frame, with a large, light-colored industrial building visible behind it under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

JAVELIN MEETS ITS END

By all accounts, the Gloster Javelin was not a very good aircraft. Designed to intercept Soviet bombers, the aircraft, immediately identifiable by its broad delta wing, suffered from performance and armament issues. Still, it stood as a deterrent to Soviet aggression during the Cold War until better performing aircraft could become available. Today, the Javelin is a rare item and its numbers dramatically decreased with the recent scrapping of an example in South Africa.

Gloster FAW.1 Javelin XA553 was withheld for test work after being built and was never delivered to the Royal Air Force. It went to the Ministry of Aviation on 28 April 1955 and its flying career seemed to have been very limited. On 13 August 1957, the all-weather interceptor was transferred to RAF Yatesbury where it was used as a ground instructional airframe before being shipped off on 23 May 1963 to become a gate guardian at RAF Stanmore Park.

When that facility was closed, the plane was placed for disposal and it was purchased by South African Mike Beachy Head for his Thunder City enterprise. Transported to Thunder City's headquarters at Cape Town International Airport, the aircraft was painted all-black and attractively mounted on a pylon at the entrance to the facility.

Thunder City was a most unusual operation. Beachy Head purchased three Blackburn Buccaneers along with three English Electric Lightnings and seven Hawker Hunters to create an all-jet facility that offered rides in the aircraft along with airshow performances. Needless to say, keeping a fleet of cutting-edge jets operational was difficult and expensive. Thunder City became the largest flying collection of such aircraft anywhere in the world.

With such a collection, especially with the potent Lightnings, problems soon arose and complaints came in about the aircraft making supersonic flights (part of the rides program, which also included climbs to 50,000 feet). One of the Lightnings was two-seat T.5 XS451 that received the South African civil registration of ZU-BEX. On 14 November 2009, this aircraft participated at the South African Air Force Overberg Airshow where it made high-speed passes with afterburners on. However, it suffered a hydraulic failure that started a fire in the lower rear fuselage (an unfortunate occurrence that happened too often with the Lightnings). The pilot was killed when the canopy would not jettison — an essential step in activating the ejection seat. A major investigation showed all sorts of major shortcomings with maintenance at Thunder City. On 9 September 2010, the company announced it would no longer fly paying passengers.

Beachy Head died of a sudden heart attack at age 59 on 21 May 2017. All the aircraft, parts, and components were removed from their large hangar and placed in outdoor storage. However, in 2021 the collection was purchased by Jay Smith's Hangar 51 and it appears that work is being done to bring some of the aircraft back to airworthy condition. Unfortunately, little consideration was given to saving the Javelin and it was scrapped.



Pilots (left to right) Chris Reeder, Raj Shah, Joel “The Tall” Swager, and Brant Seghetti. (J. Dunn)



P-51D NL551JV prepares to taxi to the active for the fly-by. (J. Dunn)

REMEMBERING BUD ANDERSON

During August, a memorial for Gen. Bud Anderson was held at the Aerospace Museum of California located at the former McClellan AFB in Sacramento, California. Well over 200 people attended the memorial **reports Jim Dunn**. Numerous talks remembering Bud were given and participants included many aviation notables. Bud Anderson was one of the really great people in aviation — modest and unassuming, he had a career that few can hope to achieve. From a triple ace to a test pilot on many different aircraft, to a life-long supporter of the Warbird movement, Bud had lived it all. The memorial concluded with a missing man formation that comprised three Mustangs operated by Charles Somers and Sea Fury 924 from Sanders Aeronautics. It was hoped that the Mustang painted as Bud’s *Old Crow* would lead the flight but pilot Ray Fowler could not make it due to USAF commitments. Pilots included Chris Reeder (Crow Flight Lead) in P-51D *Live Bait*, Raj Shah in TF-51D *Big Beautiful Doll*, Joel Swager in Sea Fury 924, and Brant Seghetti in P-51D *Daddy’s Girl*. Fitted with Sanders Smokewinders, the Sea Fury did the missing man pull up and the smoke trails stayed in the sky long after the aircraft departed.

COLLAPSING THE GEAR

An unidentified Hawker Hunter had been used as an “attraction” at the Anglia Motel in Fleet Hargate, England. Apparently, some attempt to move the aircraft was undertaken and the landing gear collapsed, causing some damage to the airframe. It appears the single-seat fighter had been painted with a brush and we are not overly certain what sort of cliental would be attracted by such a display. We did a little research and found that this was a first production Hunter F.1 with the RAF serial of WT680. First flown on 6 October 1954, most F.1s did not have a long service life and this was true of WT680, which had been retired by November 1957. In 2005, the plane was moved to the motel. Unlike most display jets, WT680 is remarkably complete with the engine and most of the cockpit still intact.



Raj Shah in TF-51D *Big Beautiful Doll*. (J. Dunn)



Smoke on, Joel Swager leads the Bud Anderson Memorial Flight. (J. Dunn)



The Hunter does not make a particularly attractive display at the Anglia Motel.



C-47 PH-PBA when it was operating in KLM colors.

END OF AN ERA

On 24/25 August, DDA (Dutch Dakota Association) Classic Airlines flew its last-ever passenger flights from Lelystad Airport in The Netherlands. The vintage DC-3 made six flights, taking 108 passengers over the Formula 1 circuit at Zandvoort. The DDA has lost its hangar lease at Schiphol Airport where Dakota PH-PBA was based. Unfortunately, there is no affordable hangar space in the area. The DDA is facing many other problems including the fact that the European Union is banning the use of 100LL avgas. Also, numerous airports have banned the DC-3 because of complaints about “noise” and “environmental concerns” of having the aircraft fly overhead while using 100LL. Also, the Dutch airports are drastically raising their landing fees and there is no way the DDA could pass those costs on through increasing ticket prices. Also, and this is a concern of ALL aviation museums and vintage aircraft operators — the age of DDA members is increasing with very few young people coming into the organization. With the aging process, knowledge of maintaining and operating vintage aircraft is also decreasing.



The aircraft is given a salute by the fire brigade following its last passenger flight.

The DDA’s C-47 was built as USAAF 42-100971 and completed on 11 January 1944. The plane flew during D-Day as part of Mission *Boston*. Five hours before the invasion, the aircraft dropped paratroopers from the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment over Sainte-Mere-Eglise in Normandy. On 17 September 1944, it flew in Operation *Market Garden* and dropped paratroopers near Arnhem. By this time, it carried the name *The Squirrel* on its nose and also flew Gen. James Gavin and staff to the Battle of Arnhem.

In late 1945, the aircraft was purchased by HRH Prince Bernard with approval from Gen. Dwight Eisenhower. Carrying the registration PH-PBA, it became The Netherlands’ first post-war government aircraft. It was replaced in 1961 and then used as a calibration aircraft before going as a museum display with KLM markings. In 1996, Prince Bernhard established a foundation to take care of the plane and it was fully restored. So, what is the future for this historic aircraft? It is unclear but what is clear is that similar aeronautical foundations around the world will be facing the same problems.



The wreckage of PT-13D N4712V.

KAYDET VS. WIND TURBINE

It finally has happened — a vintage aircraft has collided with a wind turbine. Stearman PT-13D N4712V impacted one of the huge turbines near Nettersheim, Germany. The aircraft with two on board was heading to Speyer Airfield in low cloud and rain. The Stearman collided with one of the blades and immediately crashed, killing the female passenger and severely injuring the pilot.



Shrouded in mist, the wind turbine was difficult to see.



Sea Prince C-GJIE disassembled in outdoor storage.

ABANDONED SEA PRINCE

While on a local flight in a light aircraft, I happened to spot an interesting aircraft while flying near the Orono/Hawkefield Aerodrome which is about 2.2 miles northwest of Orono, Ontario. Fortunately, I had my camera with me and took some shots. The plane is Percival Sea Prince T. Mk. I that went into service on 28 April 1952 with the Royal Navy as WF133. The aircraft flew with No. 750 Naval Air Squadron out of RNAS Culdrose until it was retired on 8 September 1980 and soon became the property of the Cotswold Air Restoration Group with the British civil register of G-BIDN. The aircraft started to quickly move through different owners including Atlantic and Caribbean Aviation. By 1984, it was in the USA with the registration N57AW. The Sea Prince became C-GJIE with Atlantis Transportation Services in Canada during 1987. For a decade it sat in open storage at Oshawa, Ontario, but in 1999 it was with the Canadian Air and Space Museum in Toronto where it was given a static restoration and placed back in its original markings and colors. I do not know why it was disassembled and placed in outdoor storage but that is certainly not doing the airframe any good.



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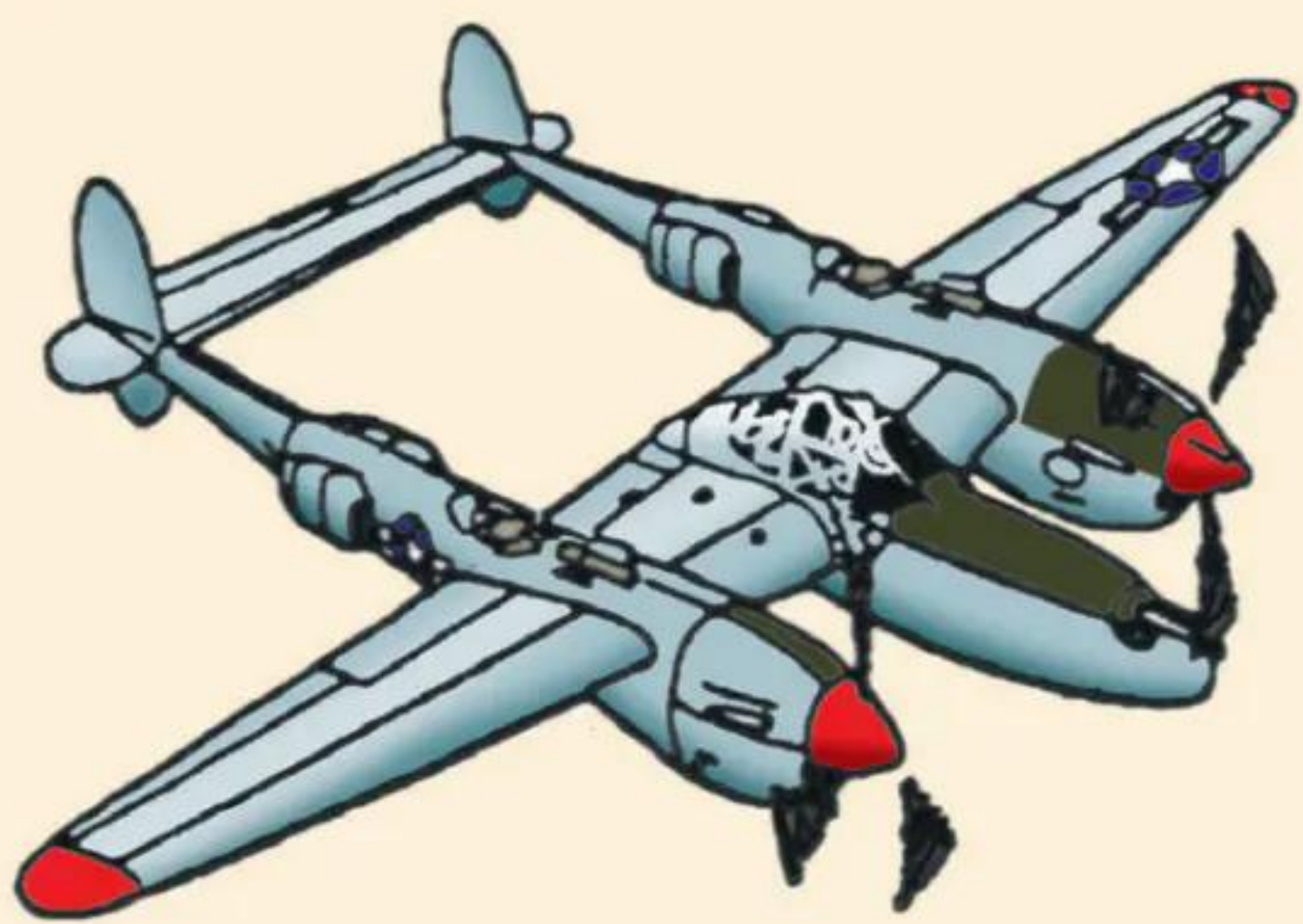
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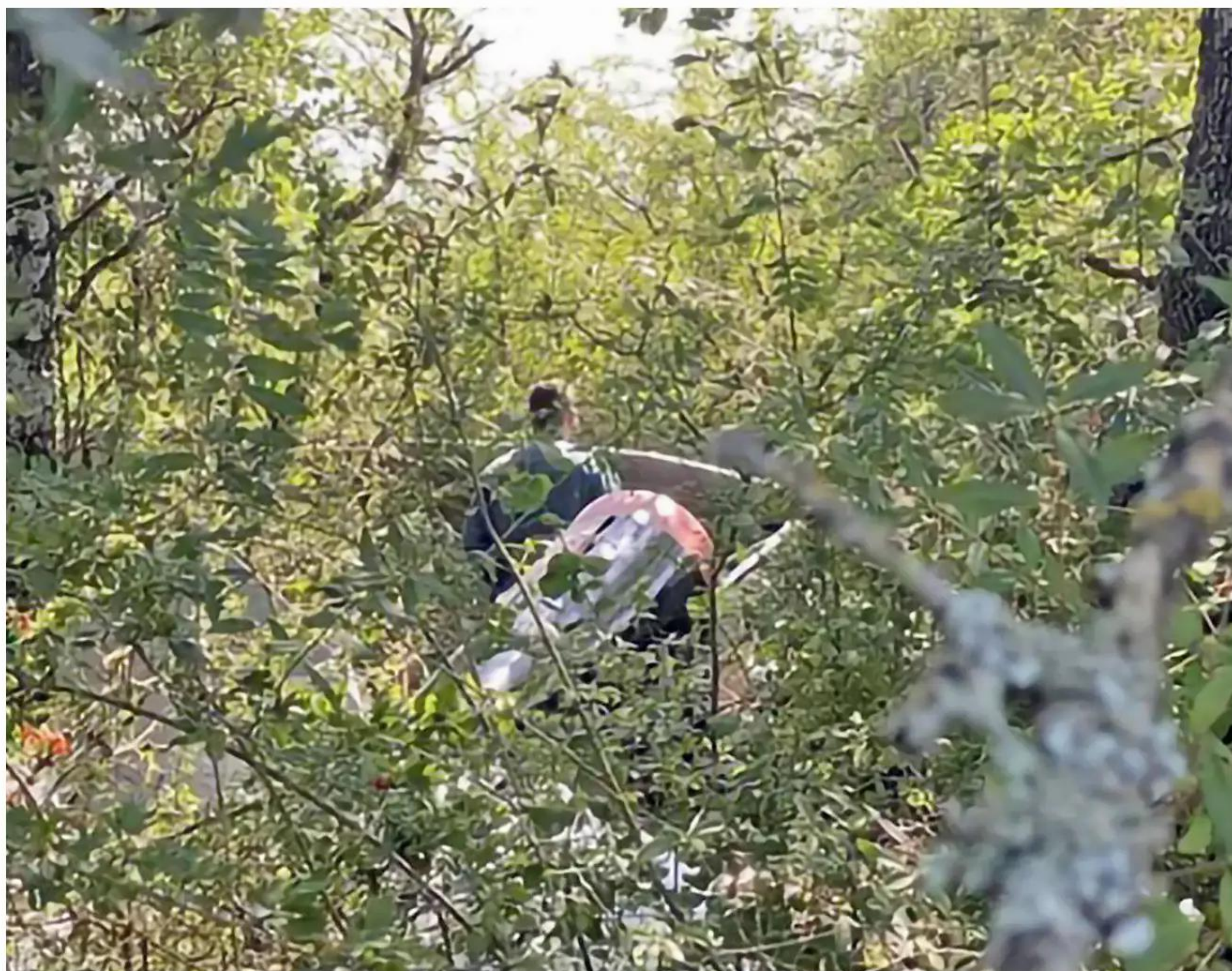
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Not much was left of the Tiger Moth after it came down in a heavily-forested area in France.

FRENCH TIGER MOTH DOWN

On 24 August, a de Havilland DH.82 Tiger Moth (registration unavailable) crashed in a heavily wooded area near Pouzac, Roches-Premarie, France. The aircraft had apparently flown over from England and the English pilot was not injured. However, the Tiger Moth was completely shredded by the trees and is a write-off.

Another Tiger Moth accident took place on 15 August when DH.82A N8233 operated by the Dutch Tiger Flight crashed into trees during takeoff from Mengerlinghausen Airfield in Germany. Damage to the Tiger Moth was substantial but the pilot was not injured.



GREEK SABRE

Wearing a paint scheme to match the gas station on which it is mounted, an ex-Greek Air Force Sabre makes for an eye-catching display. The aircraft is a Canadair Sabre Mk. 2 that served with the Royal Canadian Air Force as RCAF 19294. On 18 June 1954 it was taken on strength with the Royal Hellenic Air Force. It was purchased by the gas station after being declared surplus and mounted as an attraction. Over the years, the plane has been in several schemes and carries the fake civil registration SX-JGM on the nose. The station is located at Thermi, Thessaloniki, Greece.

SAD CONCLUSION

On 27 August, the National Transportation Safety Board found that the 22 June 2022 crash of a Bell UH-1B that killed six was caused in part by the operator's inadequate inspections and a lack of FAA oversight.

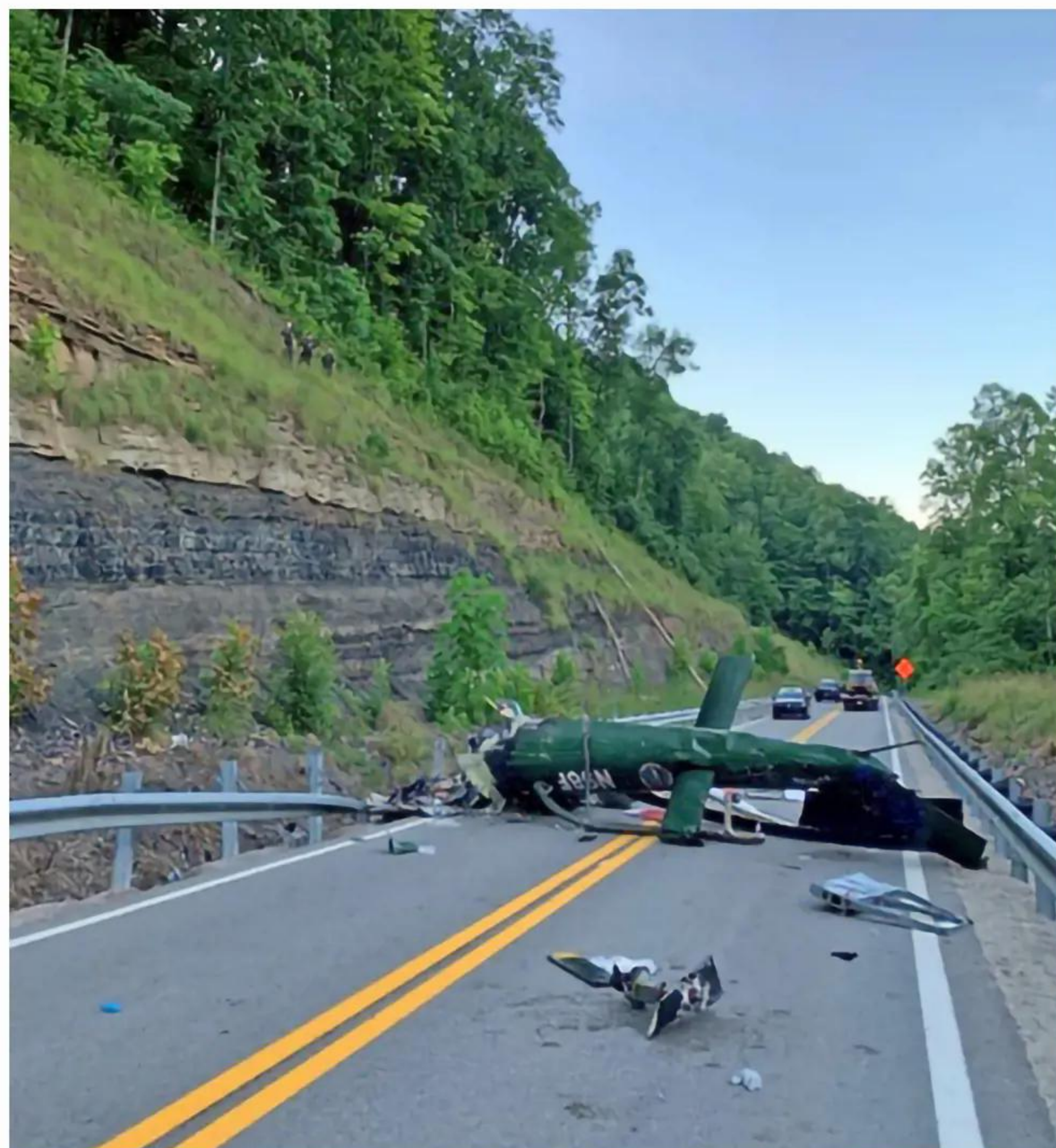
The accident took place in Amherstdale, West Virginia, when the surplus Huey hit powerlines during an attempted forced landing following loss of engine power. Investigators determined the loss of power was due to the failure of an engine component. The NTSB stated the operator, MARPAT Aviation, would likely have discovered the fatigue cracks and other engine damage that led to the failure of the component had it done more comprehensive inspections of the UH-1B.

MARPAT Aviation sponsored the annual "Huey Reunion" at Logan County Airport. Members of the public were given the opportunity to fly the UH-1B with a "safety pilot" for a required payment. Members of the public could also ride aboard the UH-1B for a smaller payment. The accident flight was the last scheduled flight of the day on the second day of the event. All aboard died.

The NTSB said the FAA provided "basically no oversight" of MARPAT Aviation. The NTSB noted that the FAA lacked guidance for inspectors to perform routine surveillance of operators with Experimental airworthiness certificates. The FAA had issued a special airworthiness certificate for the UH-1B in the "Experimental/Exhibition" category in December 2014. The NTSB said that the FAA should not have allowed the UH-1B to be inspected and maintained according to the requirements that were in place at the time, which were insufficient to ensure the airworthiness of the aircraft and operation.

Although the FAA's inspection requirements for former military aircraft were revised in February 2015, the operator was not required to employ the more robust inspection standards because those requirements were not in effect when the helicopter's most recent airworthiness certificate was issued. The NTSB recommended that other aircraft in the experimental/exhibition category be maintained with the most recent iteration of the inspection standards, the latest of which is dated July 2017.

MARPAT Aviation had previously inspected and maintained the accident helicopter to more comprehensive inspection standards when it was operated under a Restricted category airworthiness certificate, most



The wreckage of UH-1B N98F. The pilot in command had a total of just 493 hours of flight experience, including 21 hours in the UH-1B. The pilot did not have any UH-1B flight time before he began operating the accident helicopter.

recently between October 2013 and December 2014. Even though the operator wasn't required to continue to use the more stringent inspection standards, the NTSB commented that, "MARPAT Aviation's decision not to use more rigorous inspection standards when the helicopter was operated under an Experimental category certificate was also a factor that led to the accident." The NTSB has made six new safety recommendations to the FAA and reiterated one more. It should also be noted that the operator did not hold a Living History Flight Experience Exemption for the helicopter, which would have allowed the helicopter to be operated for compensation.

PLANES OF FAME/NAHI JOIN FORCES

During AirVenture 2024, a press conference was held before a variety of national aviation media to announce that Planes of Fame Air Museum and the National Aviation Heritage Invitational (NAHI) are joining forces to expand and continue to promote the restoration and preservation of vintage and classic aircraft **reports Ben Marsh**. Both Planes of Fame and NAHI have enjoyed decades of successful air shows and display events throughout the western states and beyond. This alliance will help support Planes of Fame's expansion to Santa Maria, California, and will allow NAHI to continue to attract thousands of aviation enthusiasts and keep its annual aircraft restoration competition alive.

Steve Hinton, President of Planes of Fame, stated: "The presence of the National Aviation Heritage Invitational display at the Central Coast AirFest will bring a unique and exciting element to the show. The friendly restoration competition supports our mission of preserving aviation history by highlighting exceptional displays of aircraft restoration. It's a great fit for Planes of Fame, and the Central Coast AirFest will be a great venue for NAHI."

Ken Perich, Executive Director of NAHI states, "The folks at Planes of Fame are great to work with. They live and breathe all that it takes to restore, maintain, operate and display airplanes that were flown new out of the factory decades, maybe even a century ago. We share common goals to highlight these increasingly rare flying machines in a way that educates the public on their history and honors



the veterans and pioneers of aviation that flew them. Both NAHI and Planes of Fame hope to inspire a younger audience to get involved and to keep these airplanes flying well into the future."

This year, NAHI had a dedicated display area at the Central Coast AirFest, held at Santa Maria Airport. The 2024 display was a promotional event with the goal of hosting the next full scale National Aviation Heritage Invitational competition at the airshow event in 2025.



Aerial view of Gannet XG882 showing the overall poor condition of the airframe.



Almost appearing as a scene from a sci-fi film, the strange shape of the Gannet is seen with vegetation growing up around it.



The canopies have been smashed by vandals, which has let in the harsh weather and the cockpits are completely rotted.

FORLORN GANNET

Back in the 1980s, a group of enthusiasts tried to bring a Fairey Gannett ASW aircraft back to life. The plane was Royal Navy XG882 and it served at RNAS Culdrose with that base’s station flight starting in 1959 before going to 849 Squadron at RNAS Lossiemouth. In 1966, the Gannett was sent in for overhaul and upgrades and once this work was completed, it was back to 849 Squadron. Retired from front-line duty in 1976, the aircraft was used

as a fire practice airframe but was not burned. Privately obtained in 1982, it was pieced back together with parts from Gannets XA463 and XG889 and parked at Errol Airfield, Tayside, Scotland, but nothing was done to protect the aircraft and it has been heavily vandalized and is now completely derelict with the canopies broken open to let the heavily salt-laden air into the interior. Numerous parts are missing along with a set of propellers. The future for this rare Royal Navy veteran is nothing but bleak.



Fouga Magister F-AZPZ in formation with an ex-Swiss Air Force Hunter.

AIRSHOW FOUGA DESTROYED

On 16 August, Fouga CM.170R Magister F-AZPZ was putting on an aerobatic display off Lavandou, France, with a series of maneuvers. The 65-year-old pilot had been a former *Armée de l’Air* fighter pilot and had closed out his career flying the Mirage 2000N. On the final maneuver — which looked a great deal like the L-29 crash at the 2022 Reno National Air Races — the twin-engine Fouga simply did not evidence any form of recovery and flew into the ocean.



The pilot did not recover from his final maneuver and flew into the ocean.



As can be seen, the All For Aviation Zero replica is quite convincing.



The Zero replica after its forced landing.

ZERO REPLICAS WRITE-OFF

In Czechoslovakia, a country with a long and proud aviation history, the company All For Aviation has been producing a series of scaled-down “look-alike” WWII aircraft including the Mitsubishi Zero. These planes have been displayed in the USA and seem to have attracted a loyal following. On 24 August, Zero replica registered OK-BUR45 made a forced landing at Podolsko, Pisek District, in South Bohemia. The 80% scale replica has been designed so that it fits into the US ultralight category. The pilot escaped injury.

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Vampire N23105 in a paint scheme that can best be described as “imaginative.”

VAMPIRE INCIDENT

After giving an airshow demonstration at the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, on 17 August, the pilot of de Havilland DH.114 Vampire T.55 N23105 was coming in to land but struck multiple runway approach lights while on low approach to Runway 24. The aircraft, which had been built in Switzerland and served in the Swiss Air Force as U-1222, received minor damage and the pilot was uninjured.

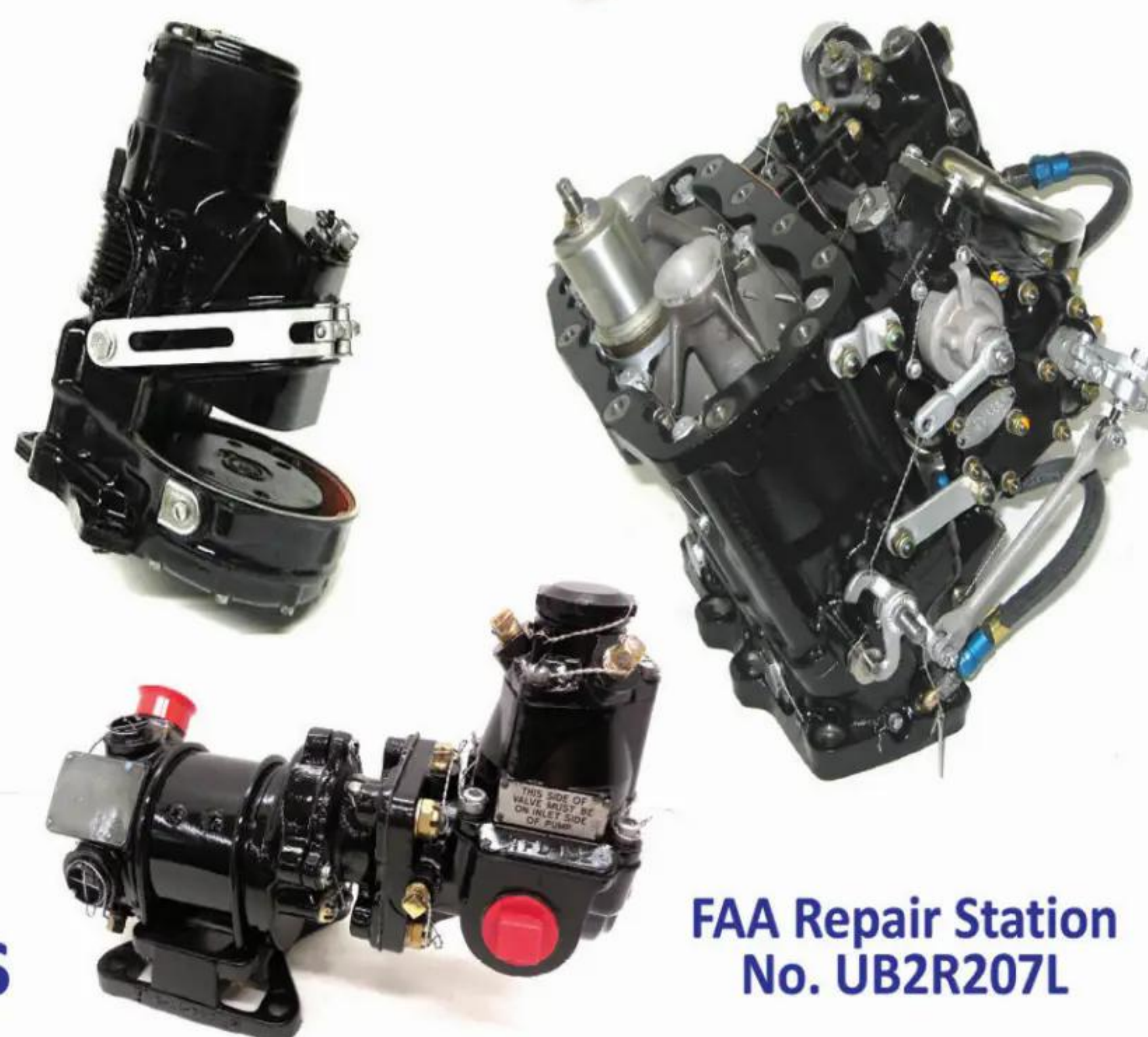
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The On Mark when it was flying as N910F.

INVADER IN THE WOODS

On 26 November 1969, Douglas A-26B Invader USAAF 44-34777 N919P was landing at historic Chicago-Meigs Field when the pilot overshot the runway and went into the lake. There were no injuries and the wreck was salvaged. This aircraft is of interest since it was one of a batch of newly completed Invaders that the government refused to take since the war had ended. The planes were flown to storage and immediately put up for sale. This allowed buyers to obtain virtually new Invaders at

bargain prices. Our subject aircraft received the registration N66661 and began a journey that saw it eventually converted to an On Mark Marketeer. During its life, the aircraft carried the registrations of N1242 and N910F. The salvaged airframe was collected by Walter Soplatka and moved to his property at Newbury, Ohio. Time went by and the airframe was completely overgrown with vegetation. However, what was left was recently salvaged and is being offered for sale. The airframe suffers from extensive corrosion and the wings were cut off during the salvage attempt.



The Invader was almost completely covered by vegetation.

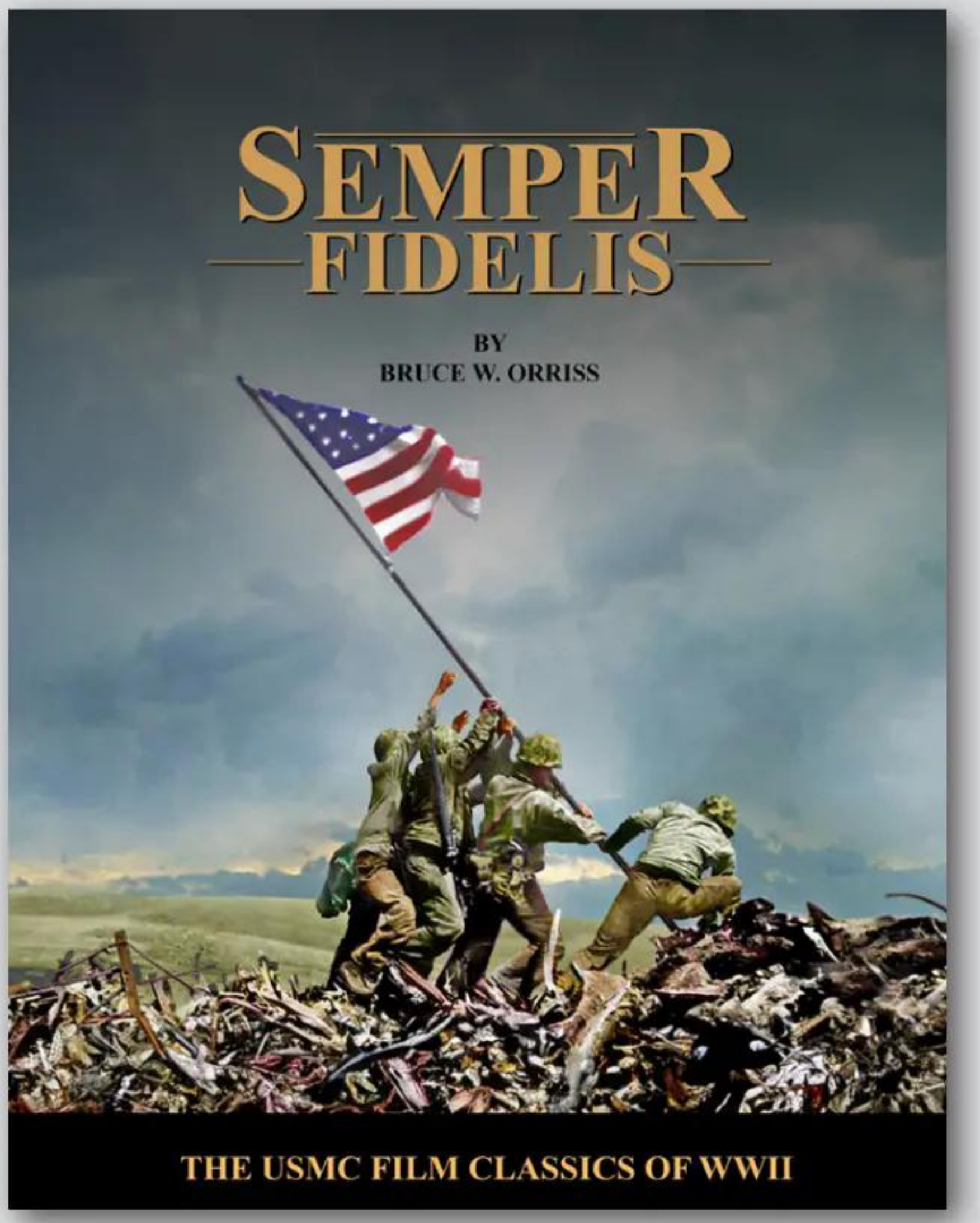
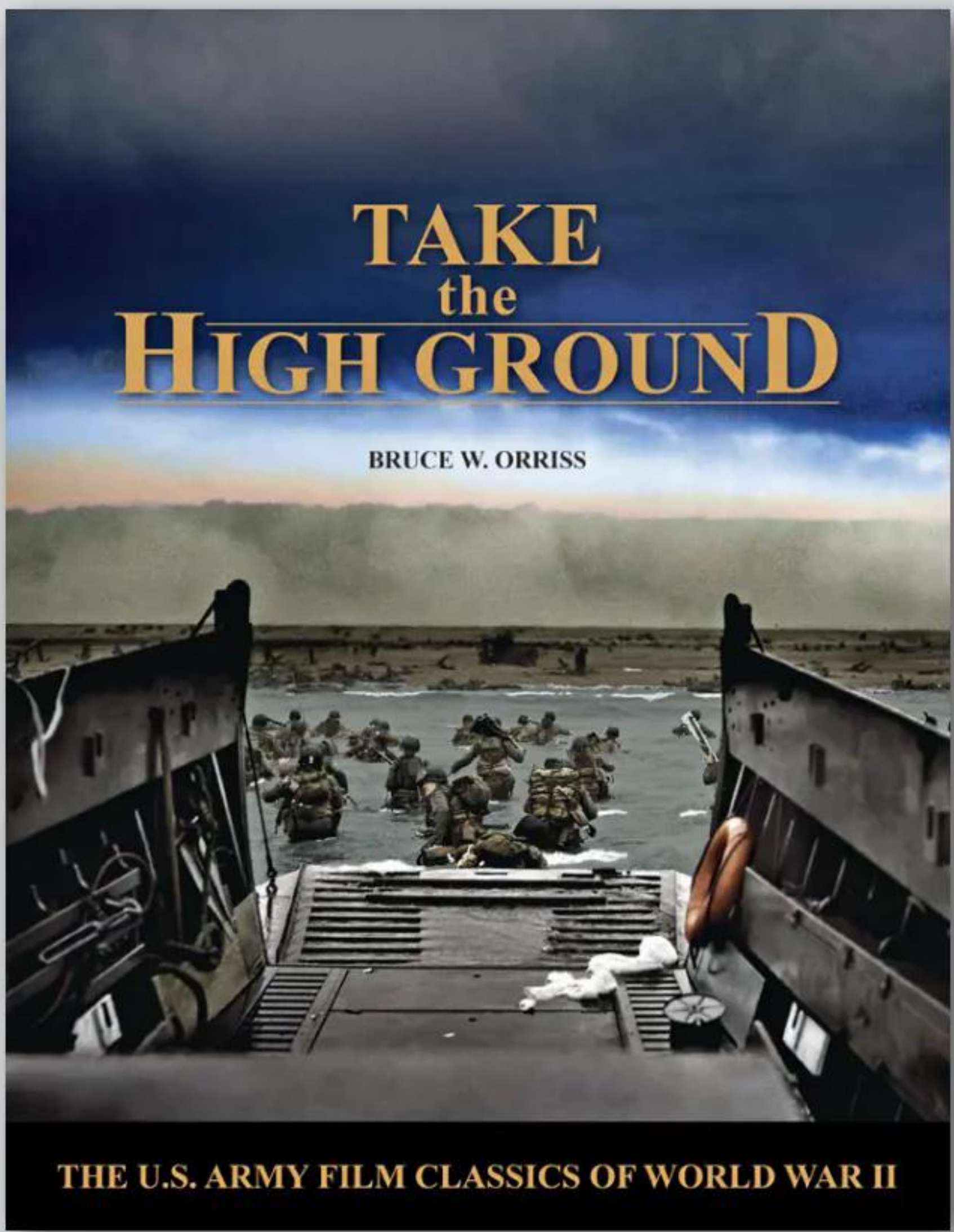
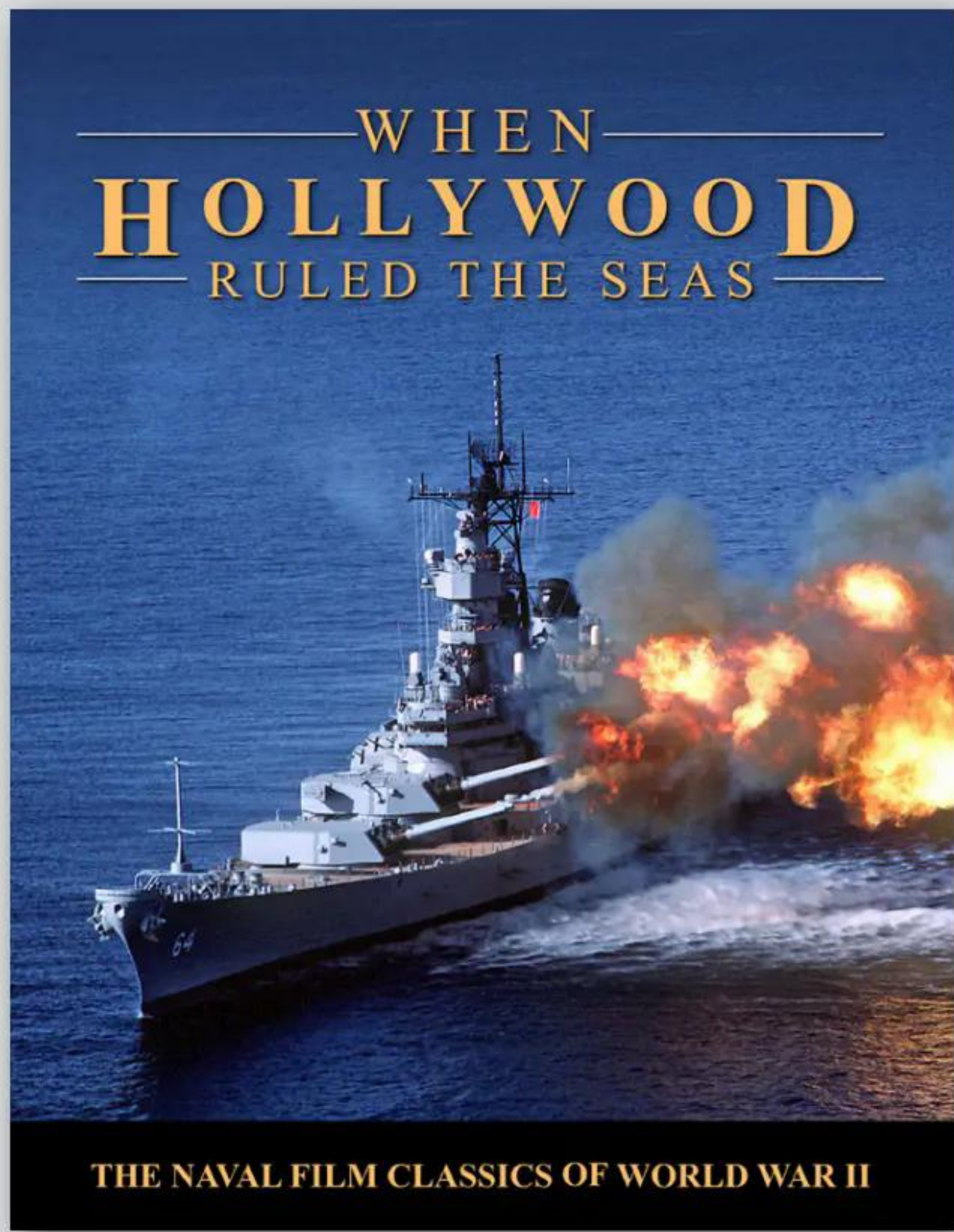


The On Mark had been stored by Soplatka for decades.



Salvaged Invader being removed from the Soplatka property.

(continued on page 80)



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KEEPING THE AIRACOBRAS FLYING

A CREW CHIEF FROM THE 1st AND 31st PURSUIT GROUPS REFLECTS ON THE AMOUNT OF WORK IT TOOK TO KEEP THE NEW BELL P-39 OPERATIONAL
BY RAYMOND J. TELICZAN, SR. (LT. COL. USAF, RET.)

From the initial introduction of the Bell P-39 Airacobra at Selfridge Field, Michigan, during early 1941 to the final, tearless farewell and abandonment of a field full of Airacobras at Grenier Field, New Hampshire, in late July 1942, my personal experiences as a crew chief with the Bell fighter may be something considerably less than wildly enthusiastic. With sincere and due respect for the designers of the basic airframe, the evolved machine which Air Corps' changers foisted on the maintenance people proved to be a heart-breaking, knuckle-busting experience in bitter frustration.

Disappointment was all the more keen because the aircraft was a real-

ly beautiful thing to behold. Why, it looked like it was doing 600 mph just sitting on the ramp! But alas, aesthetic admiration rapidly waned among the ground crewmen, giving way to piteous despair with each accumulated flying hour and each new tech order change. There was a popular theory as to how to end the war which made the rounds in the ranks during 1942. It suggested that the enemy be coerced into "capturing" all of the P-39s — they'd then be so busy keeping abreast of tech order compliances that they would have precious little time and energy left for fighting.

I suppose "disillusionment" would most aptly describe our emotion upon first encounter with the P-39. Earlier, we

had been exposed to some advance data and publicity photos that extolled the fantastic performance characteristics of the "Airacobra Interceptor." Undoubtedly, that advance billing must have described the XP-39. The service versions of that machine, with their heavy armor plate, thick bullet-pooof glass, girder-like turn-over structure, etc., quickly earned themselves the unglamorous title of "Lead Sled." The P-39s even came equipped with those flat profile tires, presumably to keep them buoyant over sodden terrain.

Right from the start, the P-39 literally and actually smelled like trouble — brake trouble



Dramatic view of P-39D Airacobras assigned to the 31st Pursuit Group (39th, 40th, 41st Pursuit Squadrons) at Selfridge Field. As war drew closer, the markings began to be toned down. For example, the individual aircraft numbers and the group number had been painted in yellow but this changed to black (compare with the "Contents" page image in the August 2024 issue). The "car doors" were ideal places on which to paint the unit insignia.



As noted in the story, the prototype Airacobras were things of beauty in gleaming polished aluminum and even looked like they were going fast when sitting still. In this photograph, Bell test pilot Jack Woolams has rolled down the right window in the auto-style entry door while he flies close formation on the camera plane.

which plagued the type for a long time. The brakes were disc affairs but wholly unlike the latter-day single plate and caliper variety. They had a multiple plate mechanism consisting of plates (discs) alternately flanged to the wheel and to the hub, so that as the wheel rotated one set of discs continually spun with it, sandwiched between it and the stationary set held to the hub. Hydraulic pressure, exerted by an inboard mounted circular-shaped bladder expanding, squeezed the plates together to produce braking action. Even when properly adjusted for clearance, the plates rubbed against each other and this generated heat.

A combination of these things acted in consort to create one of our most troublesome and recurring headaches

—burned-out brakes. Apparently, the relatively short runways at Selfridge and the unfamiliarity of the pilots with tri-cycle landing gear operation were basic to the problem. One must remember that our pilots were transitioning from P-40s (and, in some instances, from Seversky P-35s). Once the P-39 hit the runway on all three points, it presented a very clean, razor-sharp frontal area to

the relative wind, and did not have the ground effect resistance of the angled wing and empennage of the typical taildragger to which our pilots were accustomed. There was only one way for them to stop that heavy, rolling mass — stomp

on the brakes. The Airacobra stopped all right, but in a cloud of rubber smoke and steaming hydraulic fluid!

Often, and I really do mean often, the generated braking heat fused the discs together as though they were welded. Many times, we had to tow fighters back from the end of the runway due to locked wheels, burned flat tires, or boiled out hydraulic fluid. For a period, many aircraft remained grounded for lack of replacement brake plates and tires, the mortality rate of these items being so high. Some of us instituted the practice of leaving off the wheel well cowlings and wheel dust plate to facilitate changing tires and brakes. Even during “normal” operations, the brakes heated





Surrounded by work stands, an armorer goes over the nose section of an Airacobra. As the author notes, interior workspace was at a minimum and the mid-engine arrangement of the fighter added a lot more equipment to a very confining space.

up so badly that the odor of hot metal, scorched rubber and hot hydraulic fluid permeated the hangar area for hours.

One of the first major modifications to occur involved the fuel system. As I recall, the initial Airacobras arriving at

Selfridge were P-39Cs and many, if not all, of these birds were not equipped with leak-proof tanks. Originally, the fuel tanks were formed as an integral part of the wing structure. Modification entailed stripping a portion of the wing

top skin and inserting — stuffing is really the word — separate leak-proof cells into the wing cavity and interconnecting the whole as a complete fuel system. I may be stretching my memory on this point, but I do believe the work required



The Airacobra would go through many gestations — gaining weight at each step, which degraded performance. Polished YP-39 contrasts with a camouflaged P-39C at the Bell factory.



Minus any armament or armor plating, a pre-production Airacobra awaits a test flight. In this configuration, the aircraft had dazzling interceptor performance but all that would soon change. Note the Civilian Pilot Training Program Piper J-3 Cubs in the background.

three cells in each wing with a myriad of joining feed pipes, anchor straps, drains, filler openings, etc. That was one heck of a job!

Perhaps the general difficulty with accessibility, more than any other specific thing, marked the negative aspect of this aircraft's maintainability. I would say that two design factors contributed most to that situation — the sleek, slim shape of the fuselage, which necessitated cramming things into places to fit the space available, and the rearward placement of the Allison V-1710 engine itself.

At first glance, one would assume that the engine's location would facilitate ease of work — simply step up on the wing and have at it. In actual practice, however, engine location presented a most aggravating hindrance to maintenance. With a typically nose-mounted powerplant — such as on the P-40 or P-51 — removing two or three large sec-



Many of the early Airacobra variants were handed over to training units. This group of four P-39Ds was operating out of Dale Mabry Army Air Field in Tallahassee, Florida, during the fall of 1942. USAAF 41-28360 in the lead was written off on 25 October 1942 at Townsend, Florida. As can be seen, once the P-39s entered advanced training units they lost the pristine appearance of when they were operating with the 1st and 31st Pursuit Groups.



Not only was the Airacobra a tight fit for maintainers, but it was also a really tight fit for pilots and seemed to be designed for a pilot's height of about 5-ft 7-in. In the event of an emergency, both doors could be jettisoned.



Maintainers relax in a field with an early P-39D.

tions of cowling generally exposed the whole assemblage, including propeller controls, and put it within easy reach. To move from one side to the other, you could quickly duck under the engine or lean over the top. The P-39? That was a whole 'nother deal!

To really get at the Allison required removal of three side panels on each side of the fuselage, the air scoop panel, and one or two belly panels beneath the fuselage. If intake pipe or inside spark plug work was involved, the rear canopy structure had to come off. To look at the front thrust bearing seal and coolant pipes, the pilot's seat, armor plates, and access panel had to be removed. Of course, in order to get the pilot's seat out of the way, one of the cockpit doors usually had to be unhinged. All of this was only to obtain access to the engine. You can imagine the added work entailed in reaching for the nose armament, reduction gearcase, propeller governor, etc. When this bird was unfrocked for periodic inspection or maintenance, it looked exactly like the bare bones of a carcass stripped by desert vultures.

To further illustrate the accessibility problems, consider for a moment the related engine operating controls and instrumentation. No simple direct lines here. From the cockpit, most everything had to go forward a little, then down, then to the rear, and then up again to the engine. There was no other route for this bird had two automobile-type side

doors and those huge cut-outs could only be bypassed by going under to the floorboards, to the rear. And down there beneath those floor panels things were closer than pickpockets in a holiday subway. In addition to the above-mentioned items, the prop drive shaft, flight controls, coolant pipes and ducting, varied electrical conduits, flap and gear



Staged photo taken during one of the 1941 war games showing a P-39D with pilot, in cold weather gear, and armorers.



Lit by a floodlight, a Bell P-39D has its weapons tested at night.

mechanisms, and radio controls all competed for space. So if one wasn't naturally double-jointed or possessed of the dexterity of a pretzel bender, one soon became painfully aware of the

need to develop such traits in order to keep the P-39 airworthy.

A big plus in favor the P-39 was the strength of its basic airframe, particularly the main fuselage structure. With the ex-

ception of that portion aft of the engine, the main section was not what would be called full monocoque construction in the sense of the P-40 or P-51. The "fuselage" was actually one massive box-



Even though its performance left a lot to be desired, when America entered WWII the Airacobra was available in considerable numbers and its heavy armament of four .30-caliber, two .50-caliber, and one 37mm cannon is represented in this photo.



As the author notes, maintainers often had to climb and slide on the fuselage to get to desired access panels. Note the natural metal Aeroprop and the exits for gases when the weapons were fired.



Many of the P-39Ds of the 1st and 31st PGs became advanced trainers at a number of bases. A USAAF female worker inspects one such aircraft between training flights. Note how the right door held an easily accessible map case and flight report holder. The Editor recently found one such case out of a P-39 and it held all the information for the Northern Ferry Route — the route taken by Airacobra pilots leaving the factory and flying to Fairbanks, Alaska, where the fighters were turned over to the Russians. This view also shows the large armor glass section immediately behind the pilot.



Access to the wing-mounted .30-caliber guns was much easier than the fuselage-mounted weapons.

beamed engine mount. Other than the front bulkhead and turnover arch, little else of the superstructure contributed much to the airframe's strength. Junction of the fuselage to the wing and the bolted-down engine tied things together. Indeed, the bird was really tough. Of all the accidents we experienced — and some were pretty severe — I can't recall a single instance where the engine was ripped from its mounting.

Ironically, the fantastic strength of the P-39 did not necessarily assure corresponding rigidity of the whole. Because of the huge cut-outs, the fuselage did not have an integral envelope. Consequently, engine vibrations, prop torsion, and aerodynamic stresses provoked considerable interaction between the cowlings, panels, doors, etc. as to which should stay in place. Often this disunity resulted in sprung panels, popped fasteners, and missing access plates. On at least two occasions, aircraft returned from missions with both cockpit doors missing.

Of much more serious concern were the landing gear actuating mechanism and limit control switches. The gear system was electro-mechanical — similar to that of our earlier P-35s — consisting of drive motor, gear box, clutch, shafts, universal joints, and the like. Coordinating all the adjustments and clearances to assure a flush fit with everything in the full "Up" position and a positive lock in the "Down" attitude was an exasperating, traumatic experience. The thing that really curdled the cheese was the too-often experienced occasion when one of those bits and pieces failed, leaving the pilot in an uncompromising position.

Shearing of drive shafts and universal joints was rather infrequent. On the other hand, problems with limit switches were fairly common and could lead to serious consequences. Failure of the gear to retract after takeoff was not too serious, other than for the drag it created, as the pilot was reasonably well-assured of touching down safely. Refusal of the gear to budge out of its retracted position was another matter. However, the clean underside of the P-39 made belly landings easy and, aside from a few ground-down drain petcocks and bent propeller tips, no



Just-completed P-39D is handed over to the USAAF at the Bell factory.

major damage occurred.

A gear stuck in a partially up/down attitude was a real problem. A touch-down under such conditions usually caused one of the gears to collapse after which directional control down the field became unpredictable. I still vividly recall one such episode at Florence, South Carolina. During early spring of 1942, some of our pilots were ferrying in new P-39s from the factory. One of them experienced a mid-position gear failure. Upon touchdown, the nose strut collapsed. This caused the belly tank to scrape the runway and then burst into flames. The Airacobra looked like a comet, careening down the strip. Before it came to a complete stop, the pilot leapt out uninjured then, within seconds, the entire bird went up in one huge orange fireball.

While much has been said in various accounts about the P-39 being “heavy,” little explanation has been offered as to how and why this condition existed. To begin with, because of the rear engine arrangement the basic airframe had to be built as strong as a bridge. Add to that about eight feet of drive shaft, center bearing, bearing mount, separate prop reduction gear box and its attendant mounting, oil system, etc. and you

have most of the answer. There was also the extra-long nose gear strut, designed to provide ground clearance for the prop. The electric motor, gear box, clutch and the array of shafts and universal joint sector gears that comprised the flap and landing gear operating system contributed some more weight.

Last, but not least, there was that horrendous array of armament and protective armor plate. The latter varied somewhat from model to model but it generally consisted of the following bits and pieces: Thick slab of glass in the front windscreen and in the space of the turnover arch behind the pilot’s head, a slab of steel just in front of the lower edge of the windscreen plus two large plates behind the pilot’s seat, and more armor plate around the main oil tank, the oxygen tank and prop reduction gearcase in the nose. Of course, the engine itself gave the pilot added protection from the rear.

Little wonder that weight and balance remained so critical with this machine. I can well remember when some of our first P-39s arrived at Selfridge without some of the nose armament installed. To provide a proper balance for such a plane, huge chunks of lead were bolted in the forward compart-

ment. During maintenance, whenever the propeller was moved, compensating weights had to be suspended from the lift bar tube in the nose or the tail end had to be propped up on jacks to keep the P-39 from tipping on its behind.

A major source of maintenance headaches evolved about the engine. In a small way, the Bell designers could not be faulted on that account since the Allison was the only engine readily available for their airplane. However, maintenance problems were sort of built-in. Any time the engine experienced sudden stoppage — such as after taxiing into an immovable object — a complicated series of inspections and checks had to be made systematically to assure proper alignment of the propeller shaft.

Prop shaft/reduction gear box vibrations presented a hellish amount of hard work. The theory here had to do with harmonics, or something like that. At any rate, to cure this ill the prop shaft was disconnected at the engine face plate, rotated one bolt hole, reassembled and then test run. The process was repeated until an acceptable vibration level was attained. The process was called “indexing.” One must keep in mind that in order to do this job, all of the preliminaries mentioned earlier



Straddling the fuselage in the lieu of any ladders/stands, a maintainer opens one of the Airacobra's many nose access panels.

regarding gaining access to the engine had to be exercised.

The early Allison engines had developed the annoying habit of severely backfiring. This was due, in part, to flames originating in the intake manifold system. As a partial fix, flame arrestor screens (approximately one-inch thick and resembling a closely-packed honeycomb) were installed in the intakes adjacent to the heads. This worked just fine but, frequently, flaming became so severe that portions of these screens were burned away, necessitating replacement.

Detachable spark plug leads were a fine maintenance convenience. However, because of the very nature of the item they were the cause of frequent engine roughness and firing due to moisture ingress. Similarly, moisture entry into the distributor housing was a repetitious cause of failure to start and rough running. Also, cracked distributor rotors and blocks contributed their share of trouble to maintenance.

Finally, changing an Allison in the P-39 was truly hard, arduous work. Again, the problem was in the basic accessibility factor. Special hoisting assemblies were required to lift the powerplant from within the bowels of the

airframe. The rig for this purpose had to fit between the trailing edge of the wing and the stabilizer.

I simply can't leave this story without recounting an experience with the Airacobra which, although repeated on a daily process, still made my adrenalin supply flow fiercely. What I'm referring to is the routine procedure of starting the beast. Foregoing the checklist preliminaries, let's pickup at the point of engaging the starter and switching on the mags. To appreciate the "exhilarating" intensity of the situation, the reader must mentally place themselves in the seat of this machine, doors closed, starter whining away at fever pitch, and fuel boost pump buzzing. There you sit, enclosed in that cramped metal box, sweating like mad in flinching anticipation of the world about to blow up. And it does!

At the moment you engage the starter and flip the switch it happens in an instant — an instant of sequential physical and mental sensations:

1) Those first two or three-cylinders fire and with the engine scant inches behind you, you are severely kicked in the butt.

2) Between your feet, the prop drive shaft is now spinning and whining, its sound followed by the grinding rumble of the nose gear box where the dry gear teeth clash as they mesh with each other to overpower the inertial resistance of the prop.

3) The prop blades jerk into motion slowly, clanking perceptibly while taking up the backlash and torque in the system before disappearing into a blur as everything picks up speed.

4) Meanwhile, until the RPM stabilizes, the instrument panel is jiggling around as though fastened to an orbital sander, doors are clattering, controls are shaking violently, and your teeth and bones are vibrating in harmony with it all.

Oh, yes. Unless the parking brakes were firmly set and the wheels chocked, the initial gyroscopic action of the prop had the tendency to caster the nose wheel and swing the plane sharply to the left. If the ground crew happened to be standing on that side, they were now watching you with much consternation. But that was all part of life with the Airacobra. **AC**

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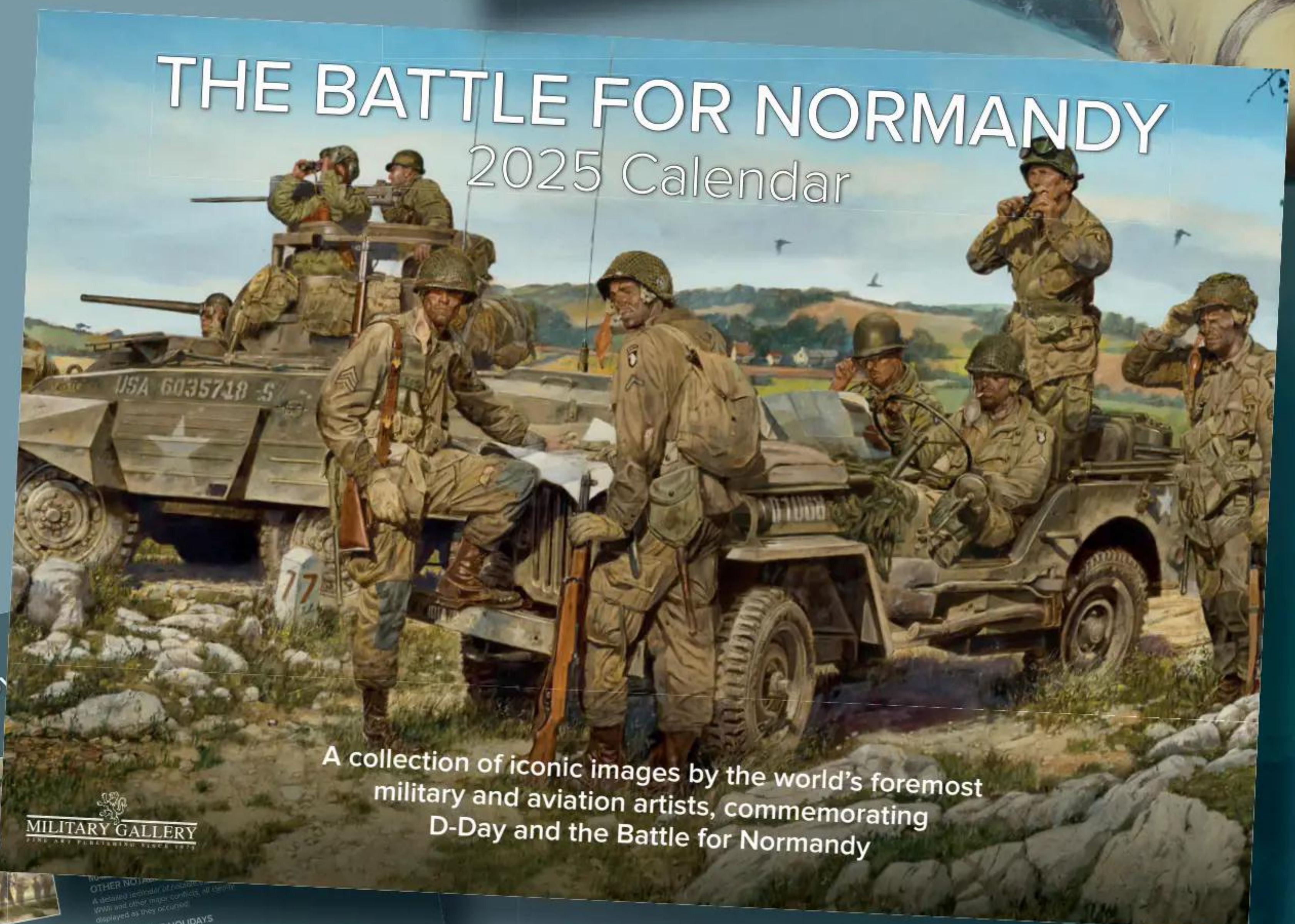
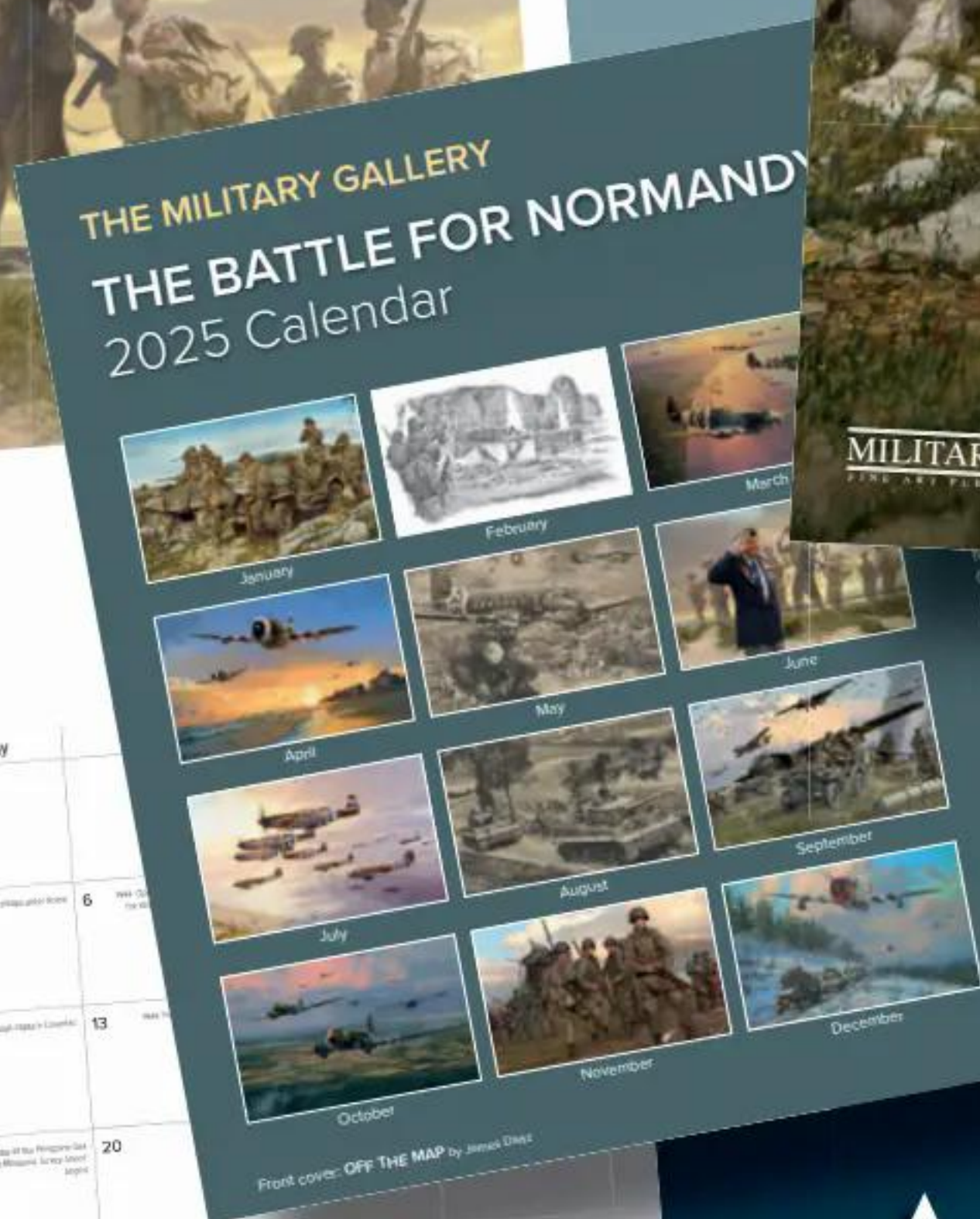
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LOG ENTRIES
BY MARK BINGHAM



The fire destroying the historic aircraft factory.

On 26 December 2022 a huge fire consumed an abandoned warehouse in Grand Prairie, Texas — or so said the news station headline. The real tragedy was that the abandoned warehouse was actually the sprawling North American Aviation factory where all sorts of historic aircraft were built. The headline had forgotten the significance of this holy place, and apparently so had the general public. Once again, history is slipping away unnoticed.

With contracts pouring in, North American (NAA) realized that their Inglewood, California, facility would soon be swamped and more space was

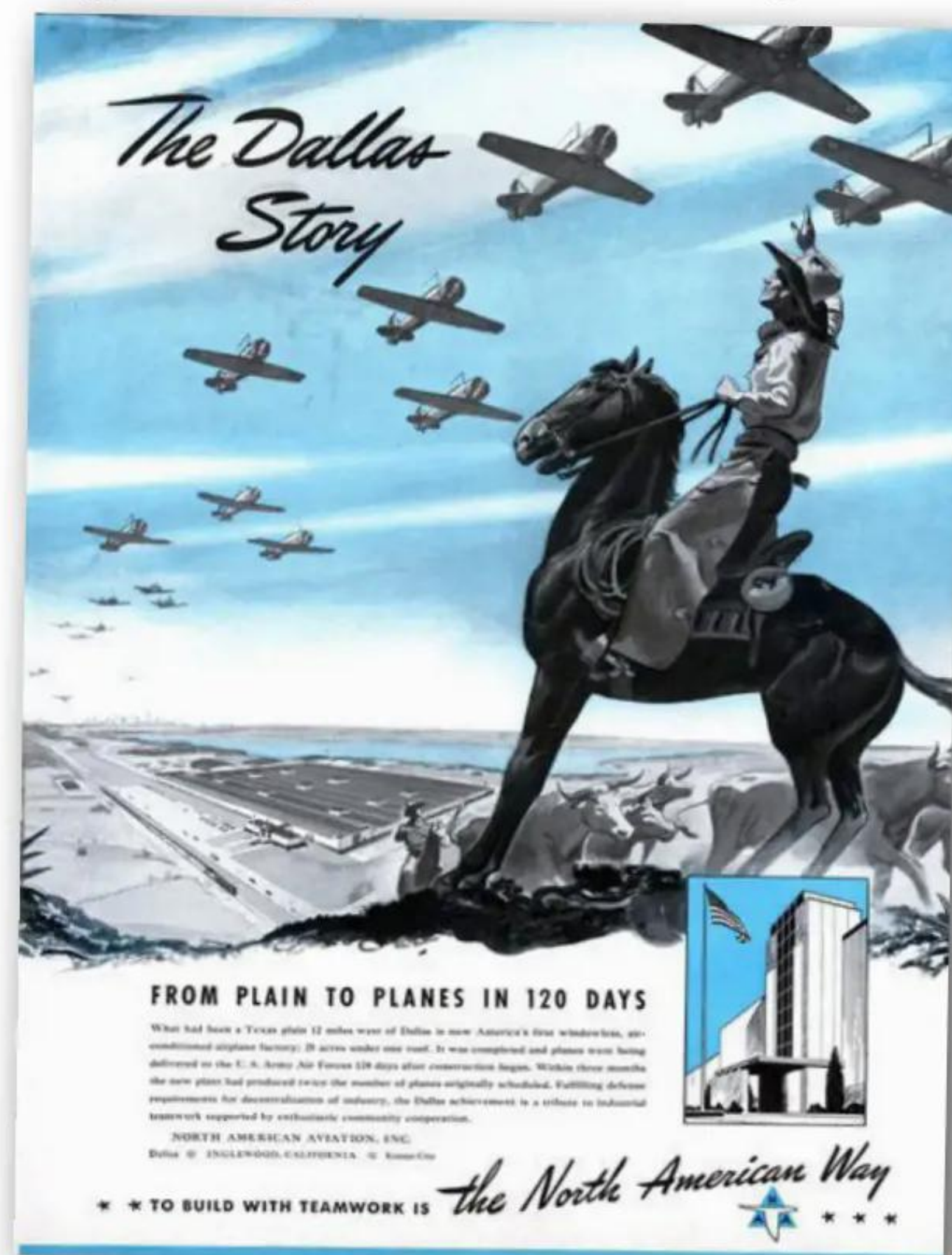
needed. This started a nation-wide search and in 1939 NAA chose a 152-acre site next to Hensley Field in Grand Prairie, Texas. On 28 September 1940, NAA broke ground on the new plant. The facility was constructed of concrete and steel and was the first windowless, fully air-conditioned, and artificially lit aircraft production facility in America. The new plant was dedicated on 7 April 1941 — once again illustrating just how fast things got done back then. Adjacent to the expanded Navy facility at Hensley Field (later known as Naval Air Station Dallas), the plane could be rolled out of the factory and directly on to the airfield.

During WWII, NAA built 12,967 AT-6 trainers in Grand Prairie, Texas, which thus earned the trainer the nickname “T-6 Texan.” NAA also manufactured 4851 P-51C and P-51D Mustangs and 966 B-24 Liberator bombers under contract from Consolidated at the Grand Prairie factory (also NAA was contracted, under Fairchild license, to build 1000 C-82 Packets but only three were finished before the war ended and the contract cancelled). More airplanes were built at this factory than at any other location in the entire United States. In one 30-day period, 728 aircraft were built — a mark never bettered in the USA or anywhere else.

With the end of the Second World War and mass cancellations of aircraft contracts, the government was faced with the problem of what to do with the huge factory (which was owned by the government). Robert McCulloch was the manager of the plant at the end of the war. Originally from Scotland, he saw a great business opportunity. Along with former NAA executive H.L. “Bert” Howard, they formed the Texas Engineering and Manufacturing Com-



The North American Grand Prairie factory nearing completion.



Advertisement to celebrate the completion of the factory in just 120 days.



Texans cover the ramp at the new factory.

pany (TEMCO). When Globe Aircraft overproduced the little two-seat Swift, TEMCO purchased the rights to the plane and began building the plane in more reasonably-sized batches. They also created a military variant of the Swift called the T-35 Buckaroo. This aircraft was placed in a contest for a new USAF/USN trainer but top prize was won by the Beech T-34. However, besides the prototypes, ten were sold to Saudi Arabia. TEMCO also acquired the rights for the NAA Navion and Luscombe. TEMCO also remanufactured a small number of P-51D Mustangs into TF-51D dual control trainers. For the jet age, the company created the delightful little TT-1 Pinto in the hope of winning Navy and USAF contracts but only 13 were built. The company also did a great deal of contract work for other companies while also seeking out non-aviation work and building popcorn machines and clips for venetian blinds.

At roughly the same time TEMCO was establishing itself, Chance Vought Aircraft was seeking a new factory and wishing to move from its long-time home in Connecticut. On 8 April 1948, Vought leased space from TEMCO and by late 1949 some 1300 people and 27,000,000 pounds of machinery had moved the 1687 miles from Connecticut to Grand Prairie. The company was soon building new variants of its famed Corsair and this was expanded into the Mach 2 Crusader, Corsair II, and a variety of missiles.

TEMCO also became heavily involved in electronics and through a series of mergers, became Temco-Ling. In 1963, this was merged with the larger and more successful Vought into Ling-Temco-Vought (LTV). LTV expanded the facility and continued to manufacture aircraft and missiles at the site until

2014. In 1973, Bell Helicopter established a facility at Grand Prairie to manufacture a wide variety of aerospace aircraft and products. All of the buildings and facilities associated with the LTV facility had been for sale for years, and the latest plan was to tear down the old factory buildings in an attempt to make the property more marketable. Then, there was the “mysterious” fire that burned the facility to the ground and, suddenly, the “problem” was solved.

The NAA factories were the aircraft manufacturing industry gold standard during WWII. At its peak of aircraft production in 1944, NAA employed up to 34,000 workers at the Grand Prairie factory, which operated 24 hours a day on three 8-hour shifts. The factory



Consolidated B-24 Liberators roll down the NAA line.



Mustangs and Texans prepare for engine runs.

payroll comprised two-thirds of all the wages in the entire Dallas area. Many of the workers were from the Dallas area so they commuted to work but there were not enough workers to build all the contracted aircraft. NAA set up a massive hiring/training program that brought in people from across the country. Most



Prototype TEMCO TT-1 Pinto.



Post-war Corsair production at Grand Prairie.

had never worked at an aviation facility yet in a few short weeks they became, thanks to the intensive training classes, skilled aircraft workers.

Further, there wasn't enough housing available locally for all of the required workers. At the time, the entire population of Grand Prairie was only 2000 residents. So NAA built a company town immediately north of the factory site for 14,400 of its employees. The company town was called Avion Village. NAA knew all about manufacturing and its attendant efficiencies, so it wasn't a big

leap for NAA to provide manufactured houses for the families of its workers. A home site could be prepared, a house could be manufactured at a central location in Avion Village, the house could be moved in, and it was made functional and livable within 58 minutes from start to finish. It is amazing what can be accomplished when people are willing to work and the government doesn't try to control or regulate everything.

Single men or women employees did not need to live in a stand-alone house, so NAA provided two-story apartments



Part of Avion Village today.



The massive facility of Hensley Field awaits developers.



Advertisement for the Mach 2 F8U Crusader.

that allowed two different shifts of eight workers to occupy an apartment at any given time. Sixty percent of the laborers in the factory were women. The entire 300-unit company town was built in just 120 days. It seems like an impossible feat even in today's technologically advanced world.

The houses and the apartments still exist today and they are well maintained. The common areas and community center buildings are jointly owned and managed by all of the owners within the Avion Village community.

An amazing story in 1941 and still amazing even today, but totally forgotten other than the state of Texas did erect a historical marker for Avion Village. A full-page advertisement in *Life* magazine and was taken out by NAA to celebrate their accomplishment of building the new factory in 120 days on the plains of Texas to supply planes to the war effort.

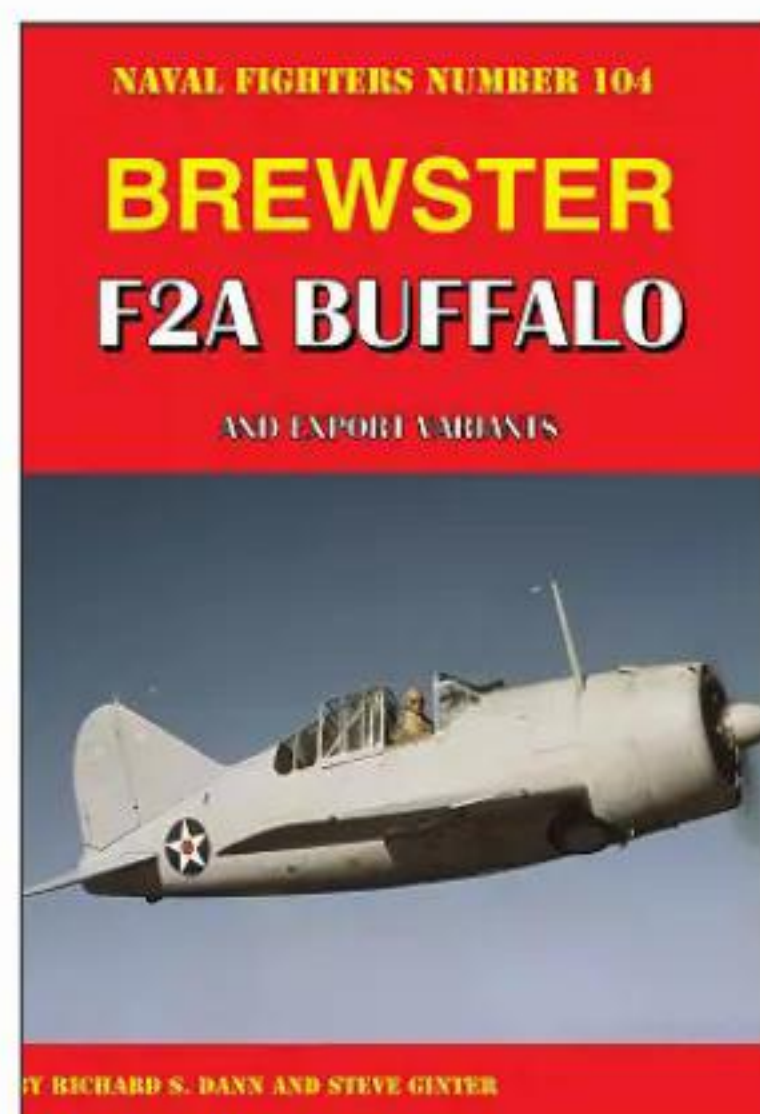
It is a sad day when all that the news could report was that a large fire consumed an abandoned warehouse on 26 December 2022. The NAA Grand Prairie factory was a significant part of America's "Arsenal of Democracy" and deserved a much greater headline. Hensley Field is closed and abandoned — a huge airfield that will be given over to developers for high-density housing at a great loss to the taxpayer. If you ever get the chance, drive through Avion Village before it too is lost to time and forgotten.

AC

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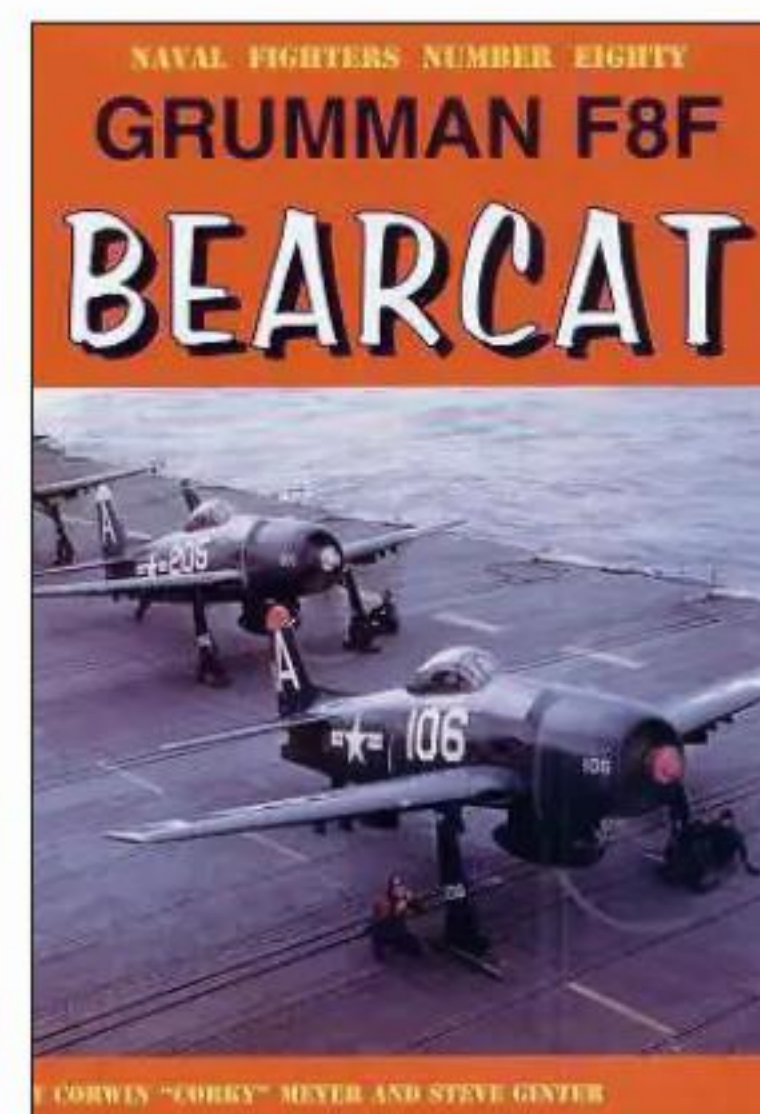
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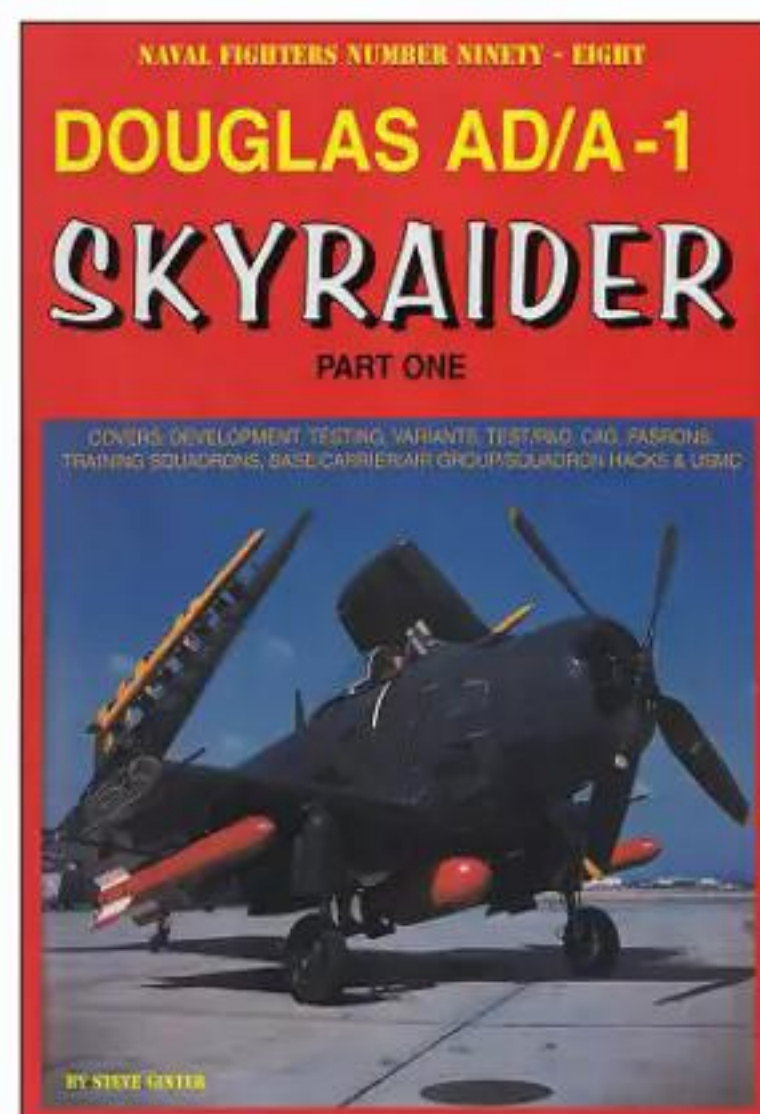
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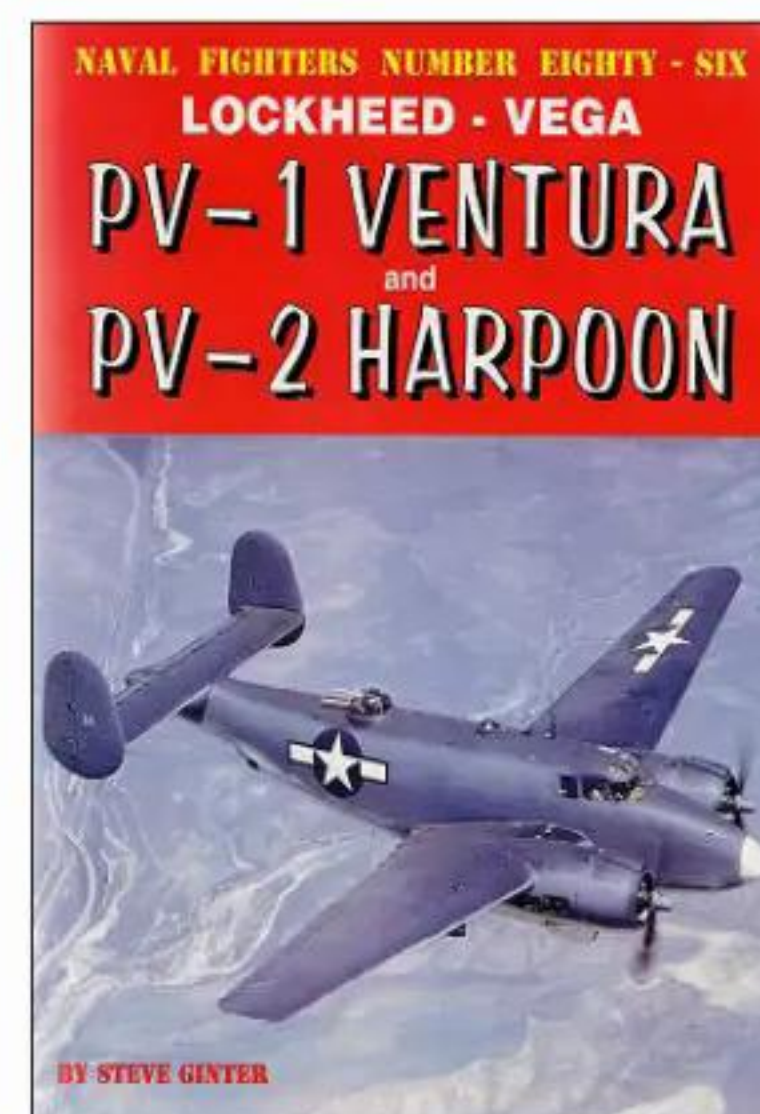
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BY JIM DUNN

Now referred to as the “Legacy Hornet,” the F/A-18C/D remains in frontline service with the Marines thanks to the very low acquisition rate the Navy has maintained in acquiring the F-35B/C for them. That acquisition rate is even worse for the Navy itself when it comes to getting the F-35C for their carrier squadrons. The final frontline Navy squadron to operate the Legacy Hornet was the “Blue Blasters” of VFA-34, who completed their last cruise with CVW-2 aboard the USS *Carl Vinson* in the summer of 2018 before converting to the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet. The next to last CAG-bird for VFA-34 was F/A-18C 165217 seen returning to NAS Fallon on 14 May 2014. After spending a last tour with the Marines in VMFA-323, it joined the current roster of 111 F/A-18Cs in storage on 1 February 2023.



Photographed at NAS North Island on 2 February 2011 was AV-8B Harrier BuNo 165421 that carried the name of USMC Maj. Gregory “Pappy” Boyington on its canopy rail. Representing Boyington’s famous World War II “Black Sheep” of VMF-214, AV-8B 165421 was retired from VMA-214 on 10 June 2021. There are 20 Harriers at AMARG as the Marine Corps replaces them with the F-35B Lightning II, and the Black Sheep are now designated VMFA-214.



What in more enlightened times would have been a very popular Warbird like the T-6/SNJ Texan, the Beechcraft T-34C Turbo-Mentor will not get the opportunity to fulfill that role. Instead of also bringing a nice return to taxpayers on their investment, the T-34C will be consigned to a dusty retirement under the hot Arizona sun. More than likely, most will be converted to scrap since neither the military nor Beech wants these aircraft in civilian hands. While a few continue to serve the Navy, currently there are 166 Turbo-Mentors in storage at AMARG. One of those that did receive a moment of fame is T-34C 161841 that was chosen to be given a heritage paint scheme for the 100th Anniversary of Naval Aviation in 2011. Retired on 14 August 2015 from service with the “Rangers” of VT-28, T-34C 161841 is seen here at the large celebration on Naval Aviation at NAS North Island on February 2, 2011.



It is customary in many Navy and Marine Corps aviation squadrons to designate one aircraft to be painted in the squadron colors, and have it assigned to the Commander Air Group (or CAG). Known as CAG-birds, these colorful aircraft are a source of pride for the squadron, as well as becoming favorites for aviation enthusiasts in a world of dull gray military aircraft. The Grumman EA-6B Prowler seemed to be made for this colorful tradition. Awaiting its crew on the ramp at NAS Fallon during an air wing deployment on 28 July 2009, EA-6B BuNo 163032 is the CAG-bird for the “Zappers” of VAQ-130 assigned to CVW-3 off the USS *Harry S. Truman*. The Prowlers are now a part of history, replaced by the EA-18G Growler, with EA-6B 163032 entering retirement at AMARG on 4 December 2018 where it is one of 36 now in storage.



While assigned to the 374th Airlift Wing (AW), 36th Airlift Squadron (AS) at Yokota AB, Japan, C-130E 63-8737 made a brief deployment to Andersen AFB, Guam to support the 40th annual Operation Christmas Drop that is conducted each December. With Santa inspecting his crew on 14 December 1992, this Hercules is loaded with toys and other needed supplies that will be airdropped to various islands throughout the Marianas and other island groups in the Western Pacific. This Hercules was retired from the 41st AS, 43rd AW on 12 May 2008, and is now part of the 103 C-130Es and 283 C-130s of all types in the Boneyard.



Despite being given one of the latest aggressor paint schemes, a pixelated "Ghost" scheme to mimic the Russian Sukhoi Su-57, F/A-18D 163457 from the "River Rattlers" of VFA-204 was retired on 29 June 2022 when the squadron converted to the F-5N for their aggressor mission. This Hornet spent the majority of its service in a training role with the "Gladiators" of VFA-106, including a period as their CAG-bird. It then began its adversary role with the "Fighting Omars" of VFC-12 before joining the "River Rattlers" at NAS New Orleans. It is now one of 16 D model Hornets in the 'Boneyard'.



Unlike the Navy, the active-duty US Air Force has kept color on its aircraft to a minimum, with one major command going so far as to remove all squadron markings and even the serial number of the aircraft. The last real show of color on active-duty USAF aircraft were seen on those assigned to one of the handful of fighter interceptor squadrons that were all gone by the early 1990s. Assigned to the “Spittin’ Kittens” of the 5th FIS based at Minot AFB, North Dakota, F-15B 76-0125 is seen on 21 October 1986 taking part in the William Tell aerial gunnery meet at Tyndall AFB, Florida. It was retired on 18 March 2008 from its final assignment with the 159th FS of the Florida Air National Guard, and is now one of only six F-15Bs in the Boneyard.



Even Navy helicopter squadrons follow the CAG-bird tradition. Each carrier air wing (CVW) has two helicopter squadrons assigned, one Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HSC) operating the Sikorsky MH-60S, and one Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) flying the MH-60R. Photographed at NAS Fallon on 14 May 2014, MH-60R 167011 from the “Blue Hawks” of HSM-78 was an NAS North Island-based squadron then assigned aboard the USS *Ronald Reagan*. Retired from service from HSM-41 on 12 July 2022, it is now one of 28 MH-60Rs currently at AMARG.





Never loved by the Air Force, and over the last decade the subject of an intense campaign to retire them, the Fairchild Republic A-10 Thunderbolt II, or Warthog, always performed its dangerous mission when called upon. Now, the Air Force has won the fight and over the next few years, the A-10 will go to the Boneyard in large numbers. See on 2 May 2004 about to depart the former England AFB in Alexandria, Louisiana, after taking part in the Hawgsmoke competition, A-10C 78-0597 displays the famous “Flying Tigers” markings of the 23rd Wing, and the “Tiger Sharks” of the 75th FS then based at Pope AFB, North Carolina. Retired on 2 April 2024, A-10C 78-0597 is one of 83 C models and 49 A models at AMARG.



When the Navy had the opportunity to order a new and improved variant of the tried-and-true Grumman C-2A Greyhound for their next Carrier Onboard Delivery (COD) aircraft, they instead chose the unproven and unsafe Bell CV-22 version of the Osprey. Currently, after a prolonged grounding coming after multiple Osprey crashes, the CV-22 is restricted to flights no more than 30 minutes from a divert base — thus making it impossible to fulfil its contracted COD mission. Congress now wants answers but, of course, they always come too late. Photographed at NAS Fallon on 7 June 2023 and only three months prior to its retirement on 14 September, one imagines that the US Navy wishes it still had this faithful COD C-2A 162147 on duty with the “Providers” of VRC-30. It is now one of eight Greyhounds at AMARG that should still be in the fleet and not baking in the Arizona sun.

After many years of service as a “bad guy” with the 64th Aggressor Squadron at Nellis AFB, F-16C became one of the more recent arrivals at the Boneyard when it was retired on 8 February 2024. Photographed on 21 January 1998 as part of the “Red Air” adversaries during a Red Flag sortie, F-16C 86-0220 is unusual in that it spent its entire career with the 57th FW at Nellis AFB. In April 2024, the AMARG inventory of F-16C Fighting Falcons stood at 136, with the total F-16A/B/C/D number being 340. A select group of these will fly again as QF-16s, with Boeing doing many of the conversions in a facility at AMARG. It will be interesting to see if F-16C 86-0220 someday becomes the hunted rather than the hunter it spent so many years doing.



It took nearly four-years and \$662 million to refurbish the USS *Enterprise* so that it carrier could conduct its last two deployments. The first of these deployments took place during January 2011 and Grumman E-2C 163693 from the “Screwtops” of VAW-123 was photographed on NAS Fallon on 8 April 2010 when it was conducting workups for that deployment. The Grumman E-2A Hawkeye entered the fleet way back in January 1964 and today the new-build Northrop Grumman E-2D is slowly replacing the E-2C in the Airborne Command & Control (VAW) Squadrons. Less than three months after the USS *Enterprise* completed her final deployment, E-2C 163693 was retired to AMARG on 30 January 2013 where it is currently in storage with 21 other E-2C Hawkeyes.

AC

PORT MORESBY'S COBRAS

THE BELL P-39 AIRACOBRA OF THE 5th AIR FORCE'S 8th AND 35th FIGHTER GROUPS
WERE THE FIRST USAAF FIGHTERS TO SEE ACTION IN NEW GUINEA - **PART ONE**
BY STEVE BLAKE



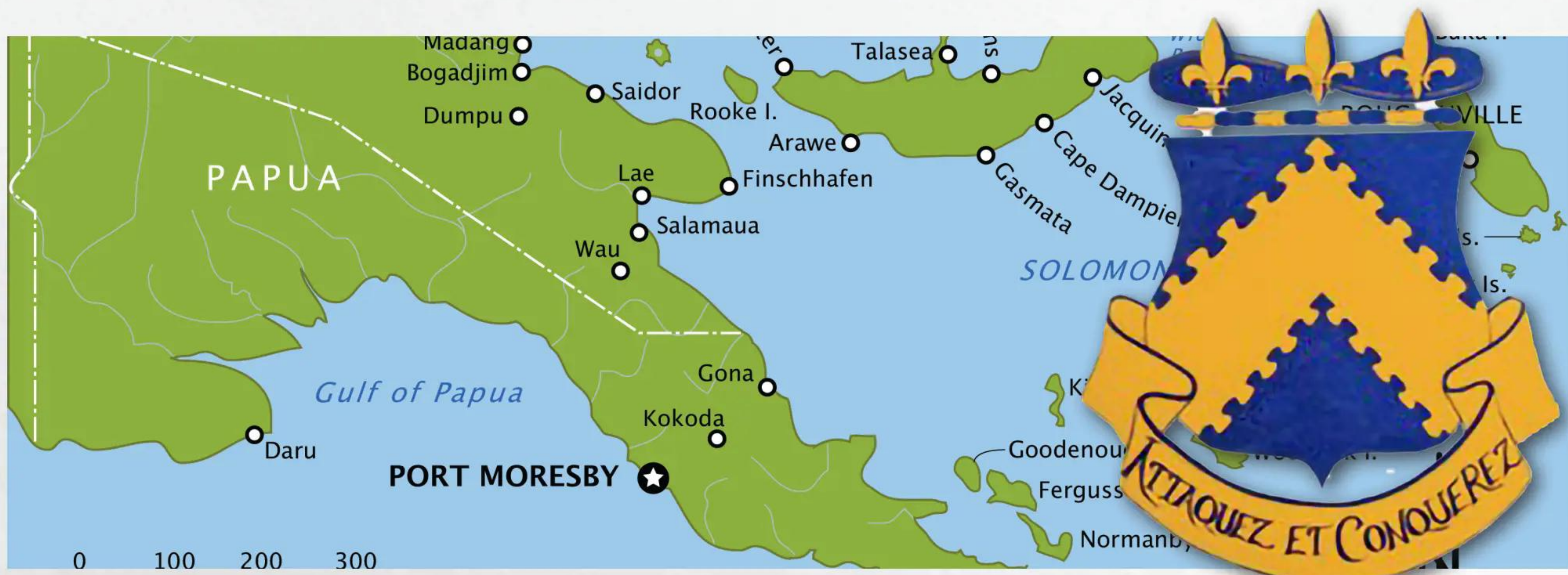
Jacket patch for the
35th Pursuit Group.

Less than two months after the Japanese invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1941, reinforcements were on their way to Australia for the US Army Air Corps' (USAAC) Far East Air Force, which, in the midst of this process on 5 February 1942, became its new 5th Air Force (AF). They included the aircraft and personnel of the 8th, 35th, and 49th Pursuit Groups (PG). The 8th, comprised of the 35th, 36th, and 80th Pursuit Squadrons (PS), and the 35th, made up of the 39th, 40th, and 41st PSs, were equipped with Bell P-39 Airacobras, while the 49th flew Curtiss P-40 Warhawks.

THE AIRACOBRA

In March 1937, the USAAC asked American aircraft companies to submit design proposals for a new pursuit plane to fulfill "the tactical mission of interception and attack of hostile aircraft at high altitude." The new design was to attain a minimum level airspeed of 360 mph and

An early P-39D of the 31st Pursuit Squadron in Panama. Even though a steady run of P-39s and P-40s were coming off production lines, the Air Corps was scrambling in the early days following America's entry into the Second World War to get aircraft to vitally needed combat fronts. The Panama Canal was an obvious point that would be defended at all costs but getting fighters to Australia would be a major logistical nightmare.



Star marks the location of Port Moresby. The fight to hold the area against Japanese aggression would depend upon Airacobras and Warhawks.

Insignia of the 8th Pursuit Group.



reach an altitude of 20,000 feet in less than six minutes.

Two months later, the Bell Aircraft Corporation of Buffalo, New York, submitted a design that it had been working on for the past year, and in October the Air Corps ordered a prototype, which it designated XP-39. (The Lockheed Aircraft Corporation responded to the USAAC's challenge with its radical twin-engine design for what became the P-38 Lightning.)

The P-39's design was also unusual for its time. It was built around a single weapon — a large 37mm Oldsmobile cannon that was located in its nose (one of Bell's ads for the P-39 referred to it as a "Cannon on Wings"), so its designers

positioned the engine (a liquid-cooled Allison V-1710) in the fuselage behind the cockpit. It turned the propeller by means of a driveshaft that went under the cockpit. Placing the engine in the rear fuselage meant there was no room there for a fuel tank as was typically the case with single-engine fighters, and it could carry just 120 gallons in its wing tanks plus 75 more in a centerline drop tank. This meant the P-39 would have a rather limited range. (A 500-lb. bomb could be carried in place of the

auxiliary tank.)

The design also included two machine guns (.50-caliber) inside the cowlings above the cannon — just behind the spinner, through which the cannon fired, and firing through the propeller's arc via an interrupter gear — and two more (.30-caliber) in each wing panel. Like the P-38, it featured tricycle landing gear with a nose wheel, which made taxiing much easier, and it also had jettisonable, automobile-like doors (including roll-down windows) on either side of the cockpit.

The aircraft, which the company named Airacobra, went through numerous design changes before its first operational model, the P-39C, was built in 1940. The biggest change was the decision, made



P-39F-BE 41-7224 in flight over the US (note the 12 exhaust stubs). Many P-39Fs saw action over New Guinea in 1942.

ments. But the subsequent addition of the machine guns, armor plating, and self-sealing fuel tanks and the resulting increase in weight, plus the lack of a two-stage turbosupercharger, decreased its climb rate considerably: The YP-39 preproduction test model took 7.5-minutes to reach 20,000 feet. The top speed was reduced by about 20 mph. The Airacobra was no longer a fast-climbing, high-altitude interceptor as initially proposed, but a competent low-to-medium-altitude fighter.



Tonight's lesson for Japs ...subtracting Zeros

A great guy takes off, and a headline is in the making... a headline about courage and spirit and Army Bell Airacobra that help him shatter Jap Zeros into "Jap-Zero" pieces. From General MacArthur's Headquarters, Australia, October 12th (A.P.) comes news of the citation for "gallantry in action" of the Army Pilot:

Cap. Mullenberg was leading a flight of Airacobras over New Guinea on May 29 when one of his planes was severely attacked by eight Jap fighters. Turning back he shot down the leader of the enemy formation and scattered the others. He then returned to his own group and made a coordinated attack, destroying three more and possibly shooting down two others.

Under control of the Airacobra pilot is one of the world's hardest-hitting fastest-moving one man arsenals. Forward is a powerful cannon. Flanking him are heavy machine guns. Around him is protective armor and behind him is an outstanding record of Airacobra success in combat.

The day is coming when Allied Victory will end this war. An advanced world of air-borne commerce will follow. Then, all

of our engineering skill and resources will turn from the needs of war to building planes for the needs of Peace. © Bell Aircraft Corporation, Buffalo, New York.

Airacobras for victory—
BELL Aircraft
FUTURE PLANE FOR PEACE
PACEMAKER OF AVIATION PROGRESS

Bell did a large amount of magazine advertising to extol the virtues of the Airacobra.



Airacobras of the Royal Air Force's 601 Squadron at Duxford, England. The squadron was equipped with the type from August 1941 to March 1942. Airacobras were finally rejected for RAF service and ended up in the Soviet Air Force or as USAAF P-400s. Note the long barrel for the 20mm cannon.

in August 1939, to replace the original two-stage turbosupercharger with a single-stage, which meant the production models would *not* have the high-altitude performance spelled out in the Air Corps' initial specifications.

First flown in April 1938, the XP-39 achieved (with the two-stage supercharger and the cannon) 390 mph at 20,000 feet, which altitude it reached in five minutes — exceeding both require-

OFF TO AUSTRALIA

The ship carrying the 49th PG from the US arrived at Melbourne, in the southeastern Australian State of Victoria, in early February 1942. Those on which the 8th and 35th PGs were transported reached Brisbane, Queensland, in northeastern Australia, in late February and early March, respectively, and their squadrons were dispersed to several airfields along the country's east coast. Once their aircraft were reassembled and flight tested at Amberly Field near Brisbane, the pilots began some intensive training, preparing for their imminent combat debut in New Guinea.

By mid-April, the 35th Group's 39th and 40th Squadrons were based near Townsville, on the Queensland coast north of Brisbane — the 40th at Antil Plains, 15 miles west of the city, and the 39th at Woodstock, ten miles beyond Antil Plains. The 41st was located to the south at Bankstown, a suburb of Sydney, New



Bell factory test pilot prepares to take an RAF Airacobra aloft for a test flight. When delivered, the British did not like Bell's interpretation of the camouflage orders.



Each RAF Airacobra was carefully crated for the hazardous ocean crossing to Britain. All the parts and manuals needed for assembly were packed into each crate.

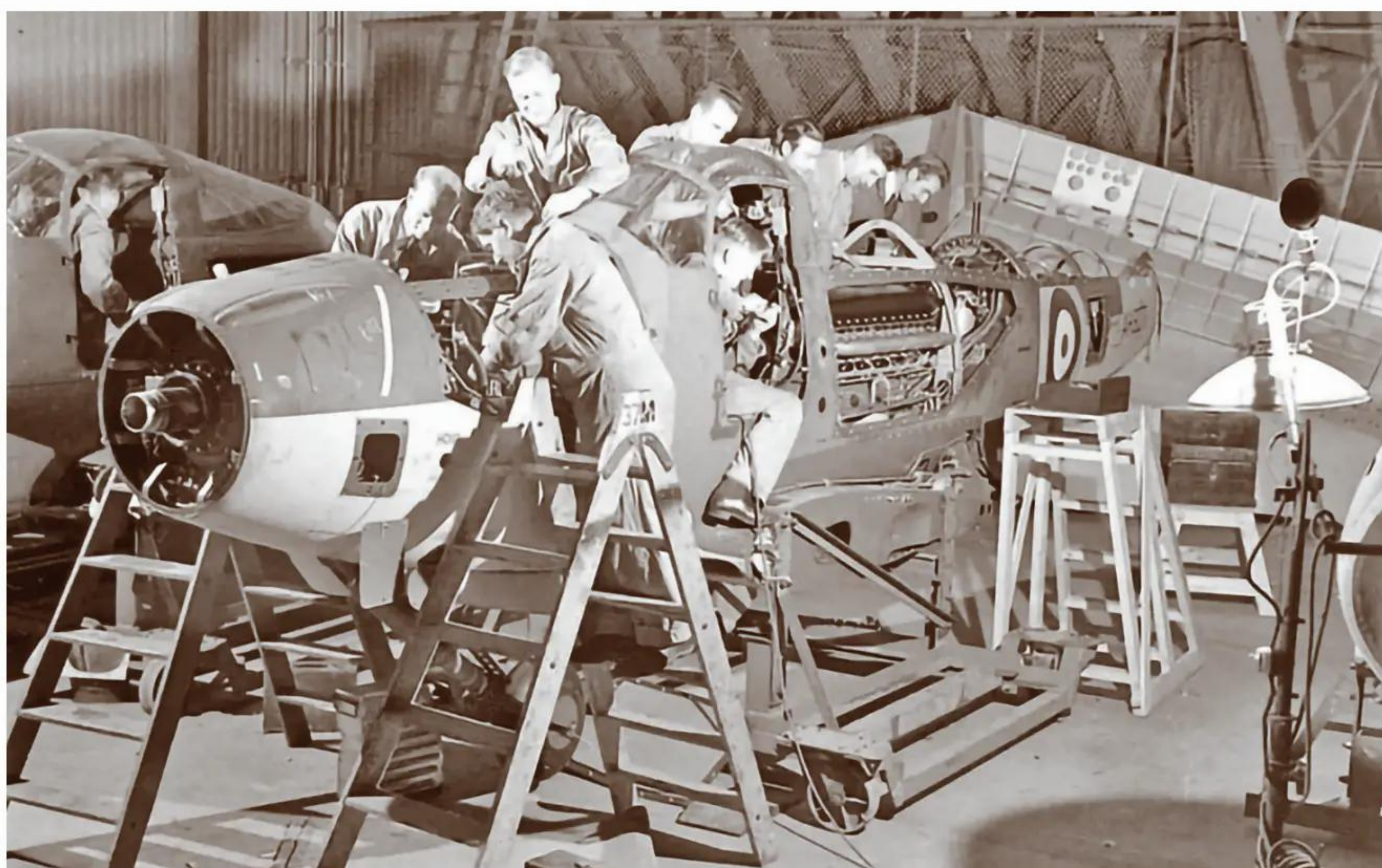
South Wales. As to the 8th Group, its 35th and 36th Squadrons were also based at Woodstock, and the 80th at Petrie Field near Brisbane. In March, the 49th PG had been assigned to provide air defense for the vital port of Darwin, on Australia's northwest coast.

By the time the 5th AF's new pursuit groups were ready to enter combat, the Japanese had swept through the Southwest Pacific, gaining control of the Philippines, the East Indies, the large islands of New Britain and New Ireland, and the northern coast of New Guinea. Next on their agenda was the southeastern portion of that huge island — the Australian Territory of Papua and its two major settlements, Port Moresby, on its southern coast, near which were several airfields, and Milne Bay, at New Guinea's eastern tip, which soon *would* have some airfields. If they were captured the Japanese would have bases from which to launch an invasion of Australia, a little over 300 miles to the south, which the Allies could not allow to happen for reasons both strategic and morale-related.

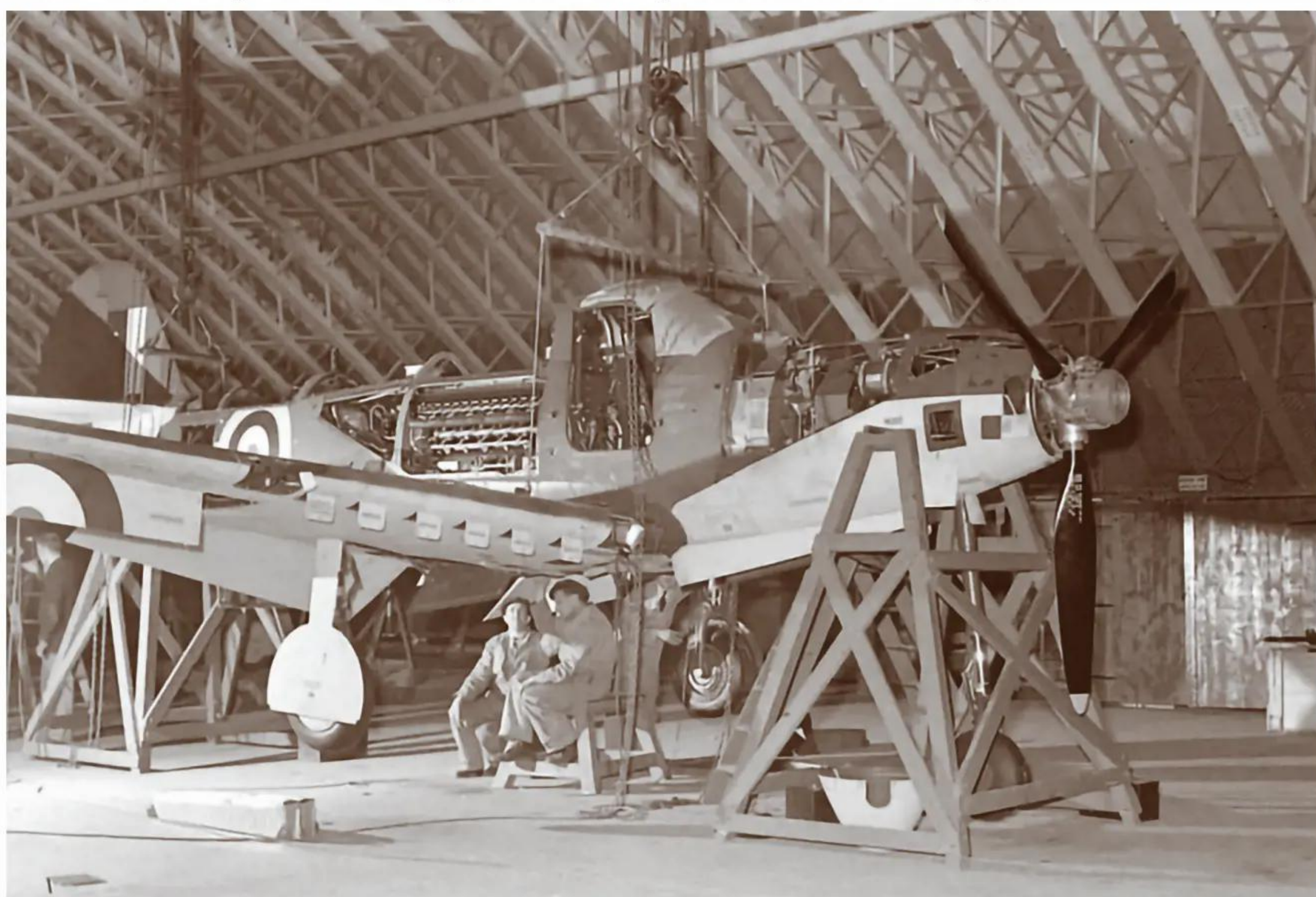
In Australia, the 8th PG was initially equipped with P-39Ds and Fs. The D model was armed with two .30-caliber M1919 Browning machine guns in each wing panel, two Browning M2 .50-caliber machine guns inside the engine cowlings, and the 37mm cannon in its nose. The P-39F was similar to the D except it had twelve instead of six exhaust stacks on either side of the engine, and an Aeroproducts constant speed propeller



The complete propeller assembly is lifted from the shipping crate. The crates were constructed of high-quality lumber and the Brits probably found good use for them once emptied of their content.



Work underway on installing interior components on a fuselage.



Wing mated to the fuselage. Note the style of camouflage, which would soon be overpainted.



Completely assembled and resprayed, an Airacobra moves to the next step — flight testing.



The British government made a major press day to announce the operational readiness of 601 Squadron and their Airacobras.

had replaced the original Curtiss Electric prop.

The 35th PG was provided with a different and unique type of P-39 — the Bell Model 14, an export version that had been produced initially for the French, whose order was taken over by the British after France fell to the Germans in June 1940. The Brits ordered even more of what they called the Airacobra I for the Royal Air Force (RAF), which would have brought their total to 645 aircraft. Its performance

had not lived up to expectations, however, and after equipping a single squadron in England with Airacobras briefly, the RAF cancelled its remaining order for them, and the aircraft it had already received were returned. This meant that 212 Model 14s were diverted to the Soviet Union and 179 were taken over by the USAAC, most of which ended up in the South Pacific. Oddly, the latter were redesignated by the Air Corps as P-400s, which could obviously confuse them with the P-39's

contemporary, the P-40. Reportedly, this was a reference to the P-39 being a 400-mph aircraft, although no early production model came close to that speed unless it was in a dive. However, surviving Bell records show the designation “P-400” in contracts relating to the British orders.

The P-400s were similar to the P-39D but had different guns, oxygen systems, and radios. They were powered by the Allison V-1710-E4 engine (the “E” standing for export), which had the same horsepower rating as the D’s V-1710-35 1150-hp and were armed with a 20mm Hispano-Suiza cannon (replacing the 37mm gun) and six British-built .303-caliber Browning machine guns, including two in the nose in place of the .50s. They also had 24 exhaust stacks like the P-39F. The fuel mixture and propeller controls on the throttle quadrant were reversed from those on the P-39, but what really created problems for the Air Corps pilots and their ground crewmen were the British radio equipment and an oxygen system that utilized a different pressure valve. The P-400s were easy to identify since they retained the RAF’s paint scheme of wavy dark green and earth brown with pale gray undersides in place of the USAAF’s standard Olive Drab and Medium Gray. They also retained their RAF serials on the rear fuselage under the horizontal stabilizers, these consisting of two letters and three numbers. Over 100 P-400s were shipped to Australia in early 1942, and all six 5th AF Airacobra squadrons would operate them at one time or another.

NEW GUINEA: DEFENDING PORT MORESBY

The first P-39s sent to New Guinea were those of the 35th and 36th PSs, which were desperately needed at that location.



Recently arrived P-39Ds or Fs in Australia in early 1942, before any unit markings have been applied or the red circles in the middle of their national insignias have been removed to avoid confusion with the Japanese planes’ red *hinomaru* (rising sun) insignia.



One of the P-400s received by the 5th Air Force in early 1942. It has no unit markings yet and retains the prewar red circle in its national insignia.

They were to relieve No. 75 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), which was flying Lend Lease P-40Es, which they called Kittyhawks. The Aussie pilots — some of whom were combat veterans of the European and Mediterranean Theaters — had given a good account of themselves while intercepting the frequent Japanese air raids on Port Moresby during the previous several weeks, claiming 17 enemy aircraft destroyed, four probably destroyed, and 29 damaged. But the Squadron's losses were very heavy: A dozen pilots and 21 Kittyhawks. The squadron flew its last mission from Moresby on 3 May before returning to Australia.

The first to depart, from Woodstock, on 25 April, were 15 pilots of the 35th Squadron, who were to fly to Port Moresby via Cairns, in northern Queensland, and tiny Horn Island, just off that state's northern tip and less than 100 miles from New Guinea's southern coast. They were led by the 35th PS' CO, Capt. George B. "Ben" Greene Jr. It was while flying between those two stops that a serious problem arose. As they neared Horn Island, they ran into a heavy rainstorm that created near zero visibility. Two of the P-39s made it there, barely, but the others became lost and, running out of fuel, landed wherever they could in Queensland — wheels down or, mostly, wheels up (belly landings). Eleven planes and two pilots were lost. First Lieutenant Jack Hall, flying P-39D-BE serial 41-6770, and 2nd Lt. John M. Long simply disappeared and were never seen again, having evidently crashed into the ocean.

A few more 35th and 36th PS pilots flew to New Guinea successfully on the 28th (and shortly after their arrival

experienced their first bombing), but the largest contingent, comprised of 26 aircraft, arrived at Port Moresby's 7 Mile Drome on the morning of the 30th. They were led by the 5th AF's Fighter Director, Lt. Col. Boyd D. "Buzz" Wagner, a hero of the disastrous Philippines campaign. As CO of the 24th PG's 17th PS, flying P-40s, he had been credited with shooting down five Japanese fighters in December 1941,



USAAF recruitment poster utilizing an Airacobra as its main theme.



A Kittyhawk IA (P-40E) of 75 Squadron RAAF. For several weeks before being relieved by the 8th PG's Airacobra squadrons in early May of 1942, the Australian pilots provided Port Moresby's only aerial defense.



Australian troops advancing against the enemy in the heat, humidity, and mud of New Guinea.



Australian pilots walk away from their Kittyhawks after a mission against the Japanese.



Formed only 17 days before arriving at Port Moresby, 75 Squadron immediately began launching attacks against the enemy. The Squadron would continue its unequal fight until the Airacobras arrived. At that point, only two serviceable P-40s survived to be returned to Australia.



Using steel planking, a returning P-40E taxis to parking under the protection of local trees. Japanese air attacks were a constant threat.

thereby becoming the first ace of America's air services in World War II.

Wagner decided to lead the Airacobra's first combat mission that afternoon, its target the Japanese Naval Air Force (JNAF) base at Lae on New Guinea's northeastern coast. He submitted a report on this mission four days later:

"On Friday, 30 April, 13 P-39Ds took off from Port Moresby on a ground strafing mission to Lae Airdrome, 180 miles north. Approach was made on Lae from 50 miles out to sea to avoid detection. When about 20 miles out, four planes were sent ahead to engage the Japanese security patrol over Lae Drome. Top cover drew enemy security patrol off to the east of the drome and no resistance by air was encountered during the strafing. A line of 13 to 15 bombers was strafed on a sea approach in a three-three plane element. The planes in each element were disposed in echelon right. Our strafing planes were then attacked from above by several Zero fighters. Belly tanks were dropped immediately and throttles opened. Our formation began to pull away from the Zeros when the last four P-39s in the formation engaged in combat with three Zeros. In the meantime, more Zeros appeared and it is estimated that there were 12-13 altogether. The P-39s were hopelessly outnumbered so the entire formation turned back and a terrific dogfight ensued. As a result of this low altitude dogfight four Zeros and three P-39s were shot down. All P-39s going down had been hit in the cooling system, as glycol spray could be seen streaming out behind, while all Zeros shot down went burning. All three P-39 pilots were safe upon landing, either bailing out or crash landing on the beach."

Kittyhawk IA A29-153 *Grace* of 75 Squadron flown by S/Ldr. Woof Arthur.



Two of the Airacobra pilots had been forced to turn back with engine trouble, leaving eleven to hit Lae, who achieved complete surprise. After the strafe five of the bombers were seen to be on fire, and three floatplanes anchored near the beach had been riddled with bullets. On the way home they targeted Salamaua, just south of Lae, where some facilities and materiel — including three more aircraft — were shot up.

It was as they departed Salamaua that they were attacked by a dozen of the JNAF's Mitsubishi A6M Type 0 fighters — the infamous "Zeros." The 35th PS' CO, Capt. Greene, dove on one that had latched onto the tail of one of his pilots. As he then followed it into a fast climb and his Airacobra began to approach the edge of a stall, he hit it with two good bursts and it reportedly fell into the sea. Three other Zeros were claimed by Lt. Col. Wagner as probably destroyed, but they were all later upgraded to destroyed. (He was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross [DFC] for this mission.) The 35th Squadron's 1st Lt. David A. Campbell damaged one of the Zeros, and the 36th's 1st Lt. Paul G. Brown probably destroyed one.

Only one A6M is recorded to have been lost by their opponent, the Tainan *Kokutai* (Air Group), that day; it was flown by Petty Officer 2nd Class (PO2c) Hideo Izumi, who was killed. A total of eleven enemy aircraft were claimed destroyed or damaged on the ground and water. Despite the loss of four (not three) aircraft and one pilot, the P-39's combat debut was considered a great success.

Of the four Airacobra pilots who went missing in action (MIA), three escaped injury or capture and returned to duty. First Lieutenant Edward D. Durand's 35th Squadron P-39F-BE 41-7128 was last seen streaming smoke at low altitude about 20 miles south of Salamaua. Friendly natives later reported that Durand had been captured and then executed by the Japanese. Six months later, 17 Mile

Drome at Port Moresby was renamed Durand Drome in his honor, and he was awarded a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), the US Army's second highest decoration (Ben Greene also received a DSC for this mission).

The aircraft of Durand's squadron mate Lt. Arthur E. Andres — P-39D-BE 41-6940 — was damaged by anti-aircraft (AA) fire and he force-landed it 18 miles south of Buna (which was still held by the Australians) on the way home. Andres made it back to Port Moresby on 27 May, and he too was awarded a DSC for his actions on 30 April and subsequently.

The 36th PS's Paul Brown (flying P-39D-BE 41-6982, which had lost all its coolant) and 1st Lt. James J. "Hoot"

Bevlock (in P-39F-BE 41-7186, which had run out of fuel) both also force-landed on a beach. Bevlock and his element leader, Capt. Lewis B. "Bill" Meng, who had become desperately short of fuel, avoided the Zeros by ducking into some clouds as they headed for home. Meng was able to make it back to Port Moresby but with nearly empty fuel tanks. Brown and Bevlock also returned later, with the help of friendly natives and some



The 36th PS' Lt. Paul Brown was one of the most successful of the Airacobra pilots defending Port Moresby. He was credited with destroying two Zeros and a bomber and probably destroying two more Zeros — one of the latter during the P-39's very first combat mission on 30 April 1942.



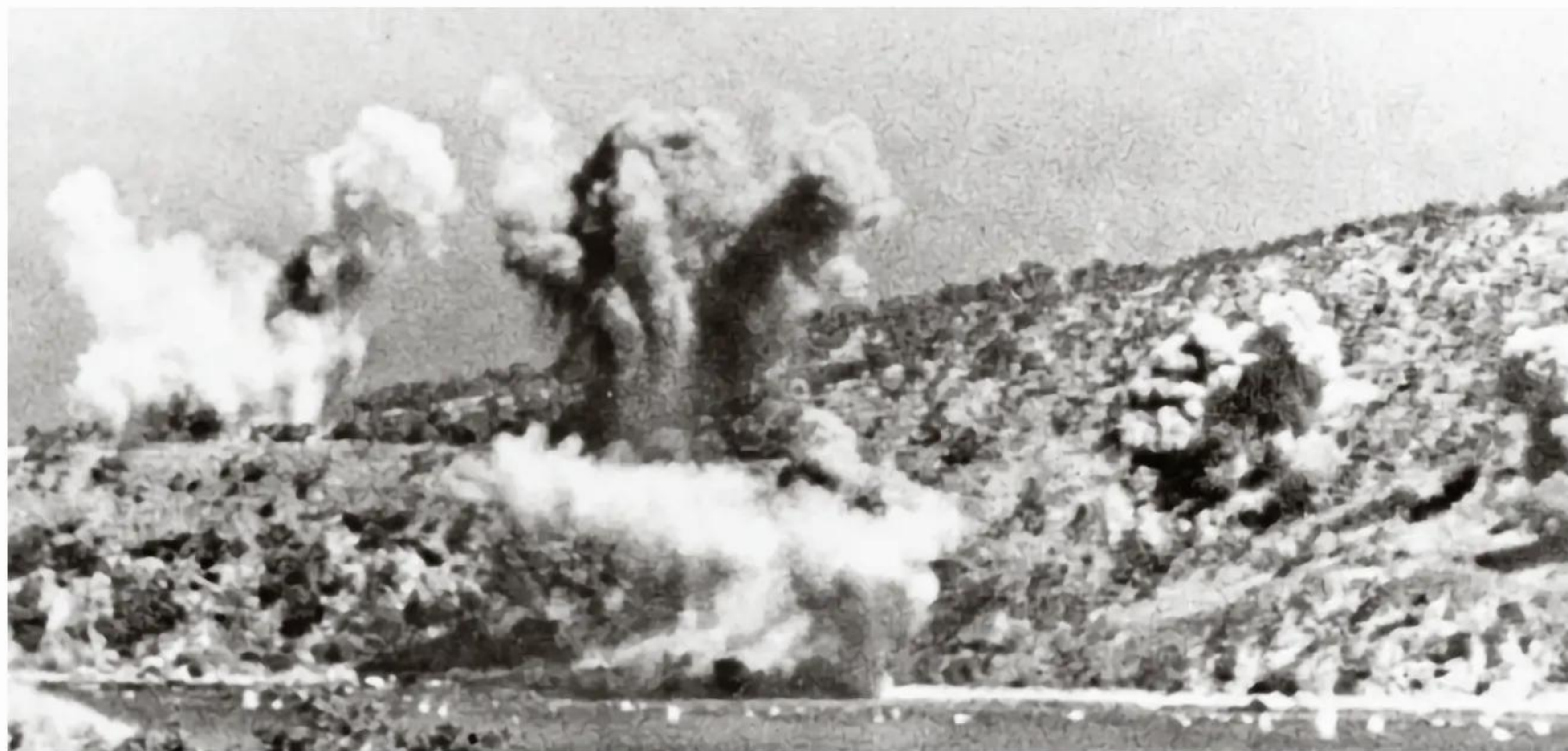
Freshly assembled P-40 is readied for flight.



Buzz Wagner posing by the tail of P-39F-BE 41-7170, which was the 39th FS' "X," in Australia.



Coastal artillery is made ready in the event of a Japanese landing at Port Moresby.



Port Moresby under attack by Japanese aircraft.

Australian soldiers.

The "dogfighting" that reportedly took place on the 30 April mission would not be the norm, if it involved turning and climbing with the nimble Zero. Wyatt P. Exum, a 36th PS pilot, recalled later that:

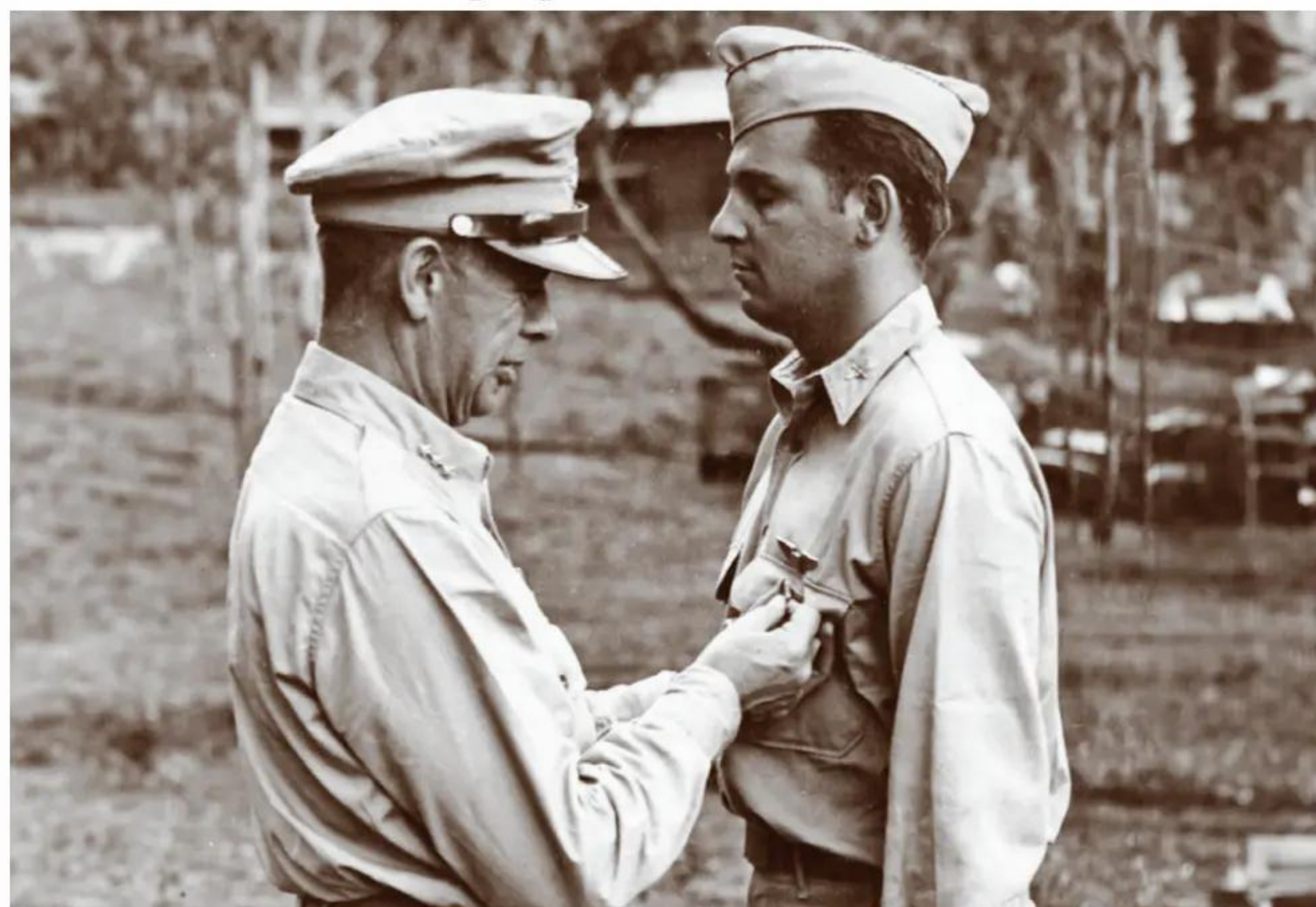
"As for dogfights with the Japs, there just were not any to my knowledge. If you had good position, you could make a pass at the Japs and keep going. If the Nips had a good position on you, you half rolled and got the hell out of there. It was about as

simple as that."

The P-39 pilots quickly learned, as had so many other Allied fighter pilots — usually the hard way — that they could not match the Zero in a turning fight, and that it was usually suicidal to try to. The Airacobra could also not climb as fast as the Zero, especially at higher altitudes, although it *was* a bit faster than the A6M in level flight and considerably faster in a dive. Also, the P-39 was much sturdier than its Japanese opponent and, due to its construction (including armor plating and self-sealing fuel tanks), could absorb more damage. Its armament matched that of the Zero, although the .30-caliber (7.7mm) machine guns utilized by both aircraft were not terribly effective. (The Zero had two of them in its nose, firing through the propeller, and a 20mm cannon in each



Lieutenant Colonel Buzz Wagner in the snug cockpit of an Airacobra.



Lieutenant Irving "Buck" Erickson of the 35th FS damaged three Zeros during the P-39s' first air battle over Port Moresby on 1 May 1942. He destroyed another Zero on the 28th of that month. On this occasion he received an Air Medal, a Distinguished Flying Cross, and a Distinguished Service Cross (the US Army's second highest decoration) from 5th AF commander Gen. George Kenney.



Jacket patch for the 35th FS. wing.) In combat the Airacobra pilots soon learned to maximize their aircraft's strong points and minimize its weaknesses against the Zero.

A detachment of Tainan *Kokutai* Zeros had replaced that of the 4th *Kokutai* at Lae in early April. (Lae had been captured shortly after Japanese forces were landed there and at Salamaua on 8 March.) It was an elite unit that had been in continuous action since participating in the invasion of the Philippines. Its name referred to the airfield on the island of Formosa (now Taiwan) from which it flew those earlier missions. Around the first of April it moved to Rabaul, near the northeastern tip of New Britain Island, which is northeast of New Guinea — from which it sent detachments to Lae. The unit's personnel included some of the JNAF's most successful fighter pilots.

The men of the 8th and 35th PGs would find the conditions in New Guinea to be nearly intolerable. Besides the frequent air raids and the damage and death they caused, there were the living conditions: Primitive housing (mostly tents), poor food, heat and humidity, tropical insects and diseases, etc.



36th PS pilot Lt. Lewis "Bill" Meng with his Airacobra. Meng shot down a Zero over Port Moresby on 2 May 1942.



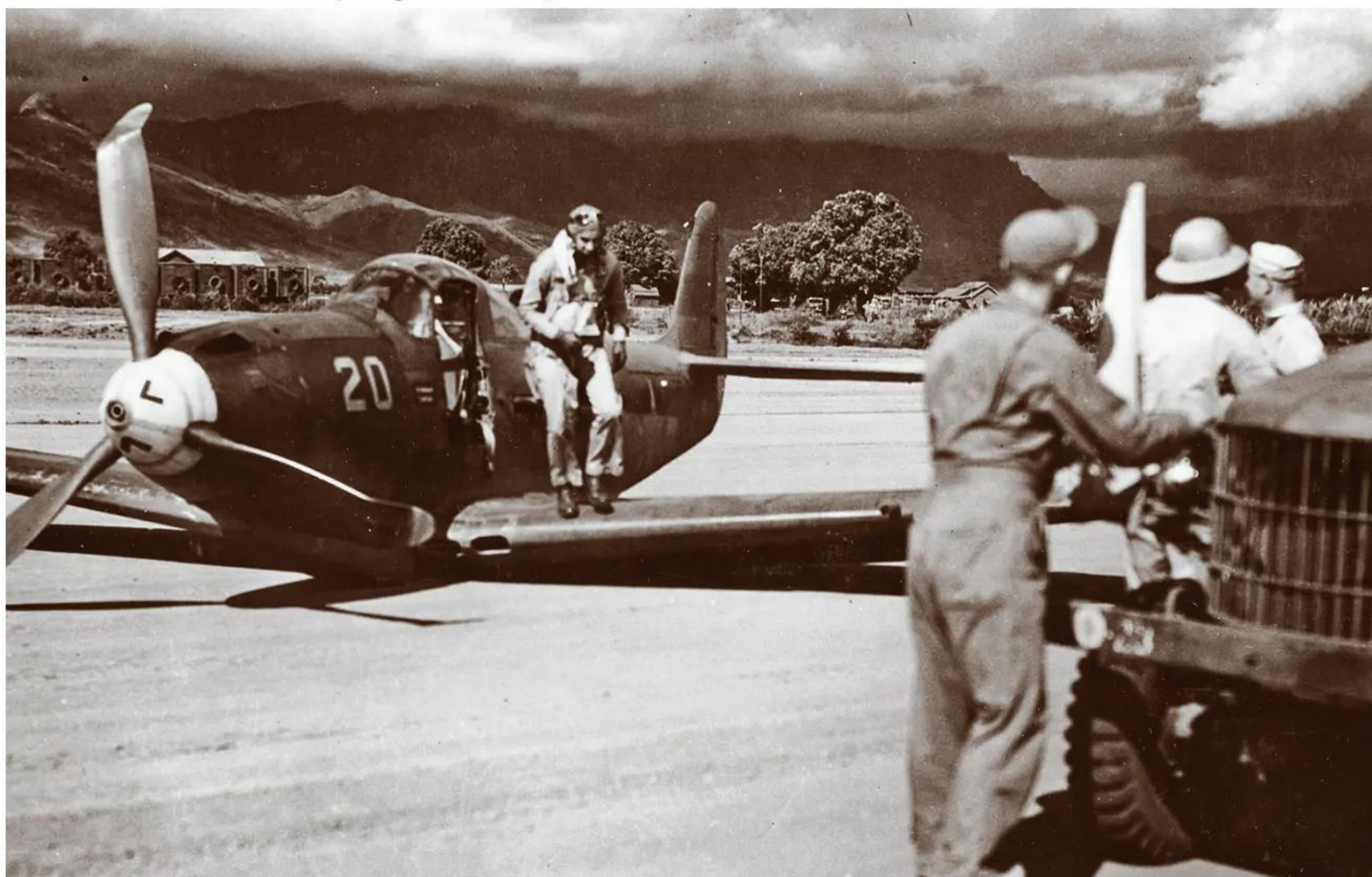
Open air repair in the harsh weather was extremely difficult for the maintenance personnel. Note the "THINK" sign nailed to the tree behind the canopy. The red circle in the national insignia has been toned down but not completely overpainted.

The two Airacobra squadrons engaged Japanese aircraft over Port Moresby for the first time on 1 May. As a three-plane 36th Squadron flight was returning to 7 Mile Drome from an early morning patrol, its leader, Capt. John D. Mainwaring in P-39D-BE 41-6943, busted his plane's gear in a hard landing. At the same time, their controller informed the other two pilots, who were still airborne and very low on fuel, that Zeros were attacking the airfield.

One of them, 1st Lt. Donald C. "Fibber" McGee (whose nickname came from a character in a popular radio show), spotted a Zero lining up behind a 35th Squadron Airacobra that had just taken off. He dove on it, opened fire, and saw hits all over it, whereupon the A6M rolled slowly to the left until it was inverted and then crashed into the jungle and exploded.



The large "car" doors made an excellent canvas for squadron artists.



Pilot of a 40th FS Airacobra steps away from the aircraft after a belly landing. Note that he had jettisoned the left door.



Airacobra pilot Phil Shiver with the squadron sign for the 40th.

It was flown by Petty Officer 1st Class (PO1c) Yoshisuke Arita, a five-victory ace.

McGee then had to maneuver violently to avoid attacks by the other Zeros. He departed the area and flew around out of sight until they were gone. His plane — P-39D-BE 41-6941 — ran out of fuel immediately after landing, while taxiing. He then checked the damage to it, which included two 20mm hits in the tail and bullet holes in both wings plus another

through the back of the canopy, which, miraculously, had shattered the sunglasses he was wearing without harming him!

McGee's wingman, 2nd Lt. Patrick M. Armstrong Jr., damaged a Zero, and three of the 35th Squadron's pilots also scored. Dave Campbell was credited with destroying a Zero, while 1st Lt. Irving A. "Buck" Erickson damaged three of them and 2nd Lt. Jeff D. Hooker Jr. one. On the other side, PO1c Hiroyoshi Nishizawa, on his way to becoming one of the JNAF's leading aces, claimed to have shot down a P-39, although none were, in fact, lost.

The seven airfields near Port Moresby were initially given simple names indicating their distance from the town — such as 7 Mile — or referencing a nearby topographical feature, but six of them were later renamed in honor of valorous servicemen, mostly pilots like Edward Durand, who had died in theater. They



Flight jacket patch for the 40th PS.

were most often referred to as "dromes" (short for airdromes), but sometimes as "strips" (airstrips) or "fields" (airfields).

Also on 1 May, a six-plane 36th PS flight left Townsville for Port Moresby. Unfortunately, its pilots had an experience very similar to that of the 35th Squadron six days earlier. They encountered heavy fog between Cooktown and Horn Island and, lost and in near zero visibility, had to put down wherever they could in northern Queensland. While attempting to do so, 2nd Lt. Robert R. Love's wingtip struck the ground and his P-39 cartwheeled and crashed, killing him. His element leader, 1st Lt. Robert W. Yundt, had successfully belly-landed, but Love had unfortunately attempted to land normally with his gear down on the rough terrain. Yundt extricated his wingman's body from the wreckage and buried him near it (it was later recovered and reinterred in a military



During most of the war the JNAF didn't award individual victory credits to its fighter pilots, so their actual scores are often difficult to determine. There is no doubt, however, that Hiroyoshi Nishizawa was one of its top scorers. He claimed to have shot down 20 Airacobras over New Guinea during the spring and summer of 1942, not including several that were shared, and to have scored a total of 86 victories at the time of his death on 26 October 1944, when the transport aircraft in which he was a passenger was shot down by USN Hellcats over the Philippines.



Saburo Sakai is arguably Japan's most famous ace. Of his purported 64 victories, 35 were scored over New Guinea in 1942 — 21 of which were P-39s.

cemetery near Townsville). He and the other four pilots were soon picked up by a rescue boat from Horn.

After these initial P-39 missions, at the end of the day on 1 May, Lt. Col. Wagner officially critiqued the aircraft's performance. The following are his observations and conclusions:

"Lack of armor plate rear protection for the engine and the resultant high vulnerability are the greatest disadvantages of the P-39-type airplane. All P-39s shot down were hit in the engine and the coolant system.

"P-39F hydraulic propellers throw oil, making visibility forward very poor due to oily windshield. Attempts have been made to stop this oil leakage by installation of new type gaskets, but complete success has not resulted.

"All guns should have hydraulic gun chargers. Charging forces are too great except for .50-caliber fuselage guns for average pilot. The .50-caliber gun solenoids are too weak and frequently fail, indicating either inferior equipment or faulty installation design.

"Main landing gear tires are too small, causing the plane to bog down very easily



35th PS pilot Lt. Dave McGovern was credited with shooting down Zeros over Port Moresby on 2 and 10 May 1942. He is seen here, on the right, while serving with the 20th FG in the US in early 1943, flying P-38s. He went with it to England (the 8th Air Force) that summer and commanded its 55th FS there, but did not add to his score.



Destroyed Airacobra named "Pat" is picked over for parts.

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“Pat” may have been a victim of a Japanese air raid but more likely its destroyed condition had something to do with the Chevrolet Blitz truck seen on its side.

in soft ground or spongy runway. P-40-size tires have proved quite satisfactory.

“Nose gear is too delicate to withstand normal operations on the type landing strips now in use. Many have been broken even while taxiing.

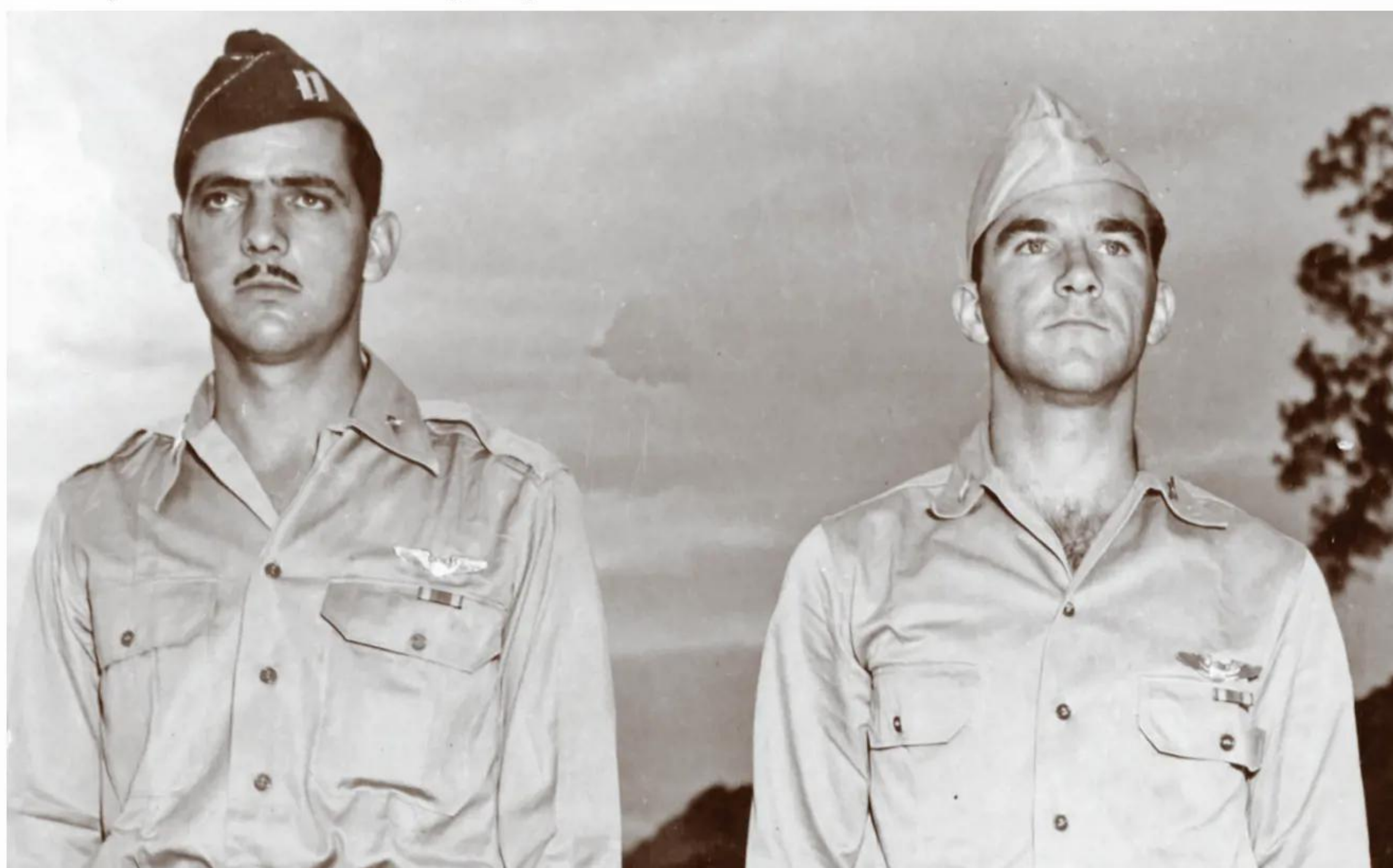
“Radio installation is out of date. A single transmitter with receiver has been found to be insufficient in close-up operations, where our frequencies are frequently and easily jammed. Radio installation in the Curtiss P-40E-1 is the most desirable. This installation provides for two transmitters and three receivers.

“P-39 gives very poor performance above 18,000 feet. The hand wobble pump or

emergency electric fuel pump must be used to maintain sufficient fuel pressure for good engine operation.

“Generally speaking, the P-39 is an excellent anti-bombardment fighter at altitudes up to 18,000 feet. Above 18,000 feet performance is sluggish and rate of climb very low.

“The 37mm cannon is an extremely desirable weapon, but ‘bugs’ are still being eliminated. Stoppages in the air are frequent, and it is difficult to reload and recharge during combat because of the high loading and charging forces. Its effect against enemy aircraft in the two previously described missions was excellent.



The 36th FS’ Capt. Bob Harriger, on the left, at the ceremony during which he was awarded both a DSC and a DFC. He had shot down a Zero near 7 Mile Drome on 9 May 1942 and shared in probably destroying a four-engine Kawanishi H8K flying boat near Townsville, Australia, on 26 July. Next to him is 1st Lt. Don “Fibber” McGee, who had shot down three Zeros and probably destroyed another over Port Moresby in May. He scored two more kills while flying P-38s with the 80th FS, becoming an ace, and yet another during his second combat tour as CO of the 363rd FS of the 8th AF’s P-51-equipped 357th FG in England. McGee, who had previously been awarded a Silver Star, received on this occasion a DFC and an Oak Leaf Cluster thereto.



Another of Bell’s full-page ads that appeared in a variety of popular magazines.

“Comparatively speaking, in performance the P-39 airplane is believed to be about 10% better in every respect than the P-40 airplane, except in maneuverability, in which case the P-40 is slightly better. Above statements are the consensus of opinion of pilots participating in the above-described combat missions.”

As to Wagner’s earlier comment about the shot-down P-39s on the 30 April mission all streaming glycol, a technical article on the Airacobra states that, regarding the location of the engine in its rear fuselage, “The arrangement proved to be very vulnerable to attacks from above and behind and nearly any hit on the fuselage from an attacking enemy fighter was virtually guaranteed to disable the cooling system and lead to the prompt demise of the engine and thus the aircraft.”

The enemy returned to Port Moresby on the early morning of the second, targeting 7 Mile Drome. They were engaged initially by the Australian pilots of 75 Squadron, one of whom was shot down, after which two flights of five and seven Airacobras joined the fight. Captain Meng was leading a 36th Squadron flight on a patrol of the area when the controller informed them of Zeros approaching 7 Mile at low altitude, with the obvious intent of strafing it. Meng spotted a lone Zero and slipped in behind and below it. It exploded in flames after his first burst. He was then attacked by other Zeros and saw cannon shells passing over his left wing. He was alone by this time, but he managed to lose them and landed at 7 Mile with minimal damage to his plane.

Bill Meng’s squadron mates Capt.



A 41st PS pilot, two of his ground crewmen, and their P-400. Left to right: S/Sgt. Baker, 2nd Lt. Robert N. Boucher, and S/Sgt. Brackelsberg. Note that the outline of the pre-war red circle in the plane's national insignia is still visible. Lieutenant Boucher scored his only air victory on 6 February 1943, when he was credited with shooting down a Zero.

Mainwaring and 2nd Lt. Joseph S. Lovett Jr. (in P-39D-BE 41-6964) attacked two of the Zeros head-on, Mainwaring's victim falling away pouring black smoke while Lovett's was last seen diving toward — and presumably into — the sea. Both e/a were credited to them as destroyed, but each of their Airacobras also sustained some damage. Second Lieutenant Charles L. Schwimmer put a long burst into another Zero that was credited to him as probably destroyed. Their squadron mate Don McGee also probably destroyed a Zero, and Capt. David R. McGovern of the 35th PS was credited with destroying another.

Hiroyoshi Nishizawa claimed two P-40s in these actions and his fellow Tainan *Kokutai* ace PO1c Saburo Sakai three. The only actual Allied loss was the one Kittyhawk, plus the two damaged P-39s. One A6M pilot, Seaman 1st Class (Sea1c) Haruo Kawanishi, was lost. This is a good example of the overclaiming that occurred on both sides, although the Japanese pilots were definitely more egregious in that regard.

Twelve bombers escorted by eight



A 35th PS P-39 "being repaired in the field."



Aerial view of Jackson Field showing dispersed Flying Fortresses and couple P-39s.



Three mechanics hard at work on an unidentified P-40 at one of Port Moresby's airdromes. Note the camouflage netting above them.

Zeros attacked 7 Mile Drome again on the morning of 3 May. Ten P-39s were able to climb to 23,000 feet (pretty much their service ceiling) and attack the bombers before the Zeros could intervene. Their pilots were credited with destroying three of them — one each by Dave Campbell of the 35th Squadron and 1st Lt. John L. Barley and Charles Schwimmer of the 36th. Second Lieutenant Charles H. Chapman Jr. also hit the latter's victim, but Schwimmer received the official credit, while 2nd Lt. Bill Bennett likewise hit Barley's bomber. Both of these planes were reportedly seen to fall away with their engine on fire. (The 5th AF did not award shared fighter victories, so in cases where more than one pilot hit a destroyed enemy plane, it was up to the pilots involved and/or their squadron's intelligence officer to determine who received the sole credit.)

The A6Ms then targeted the Airacobras and took some revenge by shooting down Joe Lovett (flying P-39D-BE 41-6909), who was killed. Although the only part of him that was recovered was one of his legs, he received a proper funeral service the following day.

The 36th PS' 1st Lt. Charlie Falletta (his actual full name) was awarded a DSC

for this mission. According to its citation:

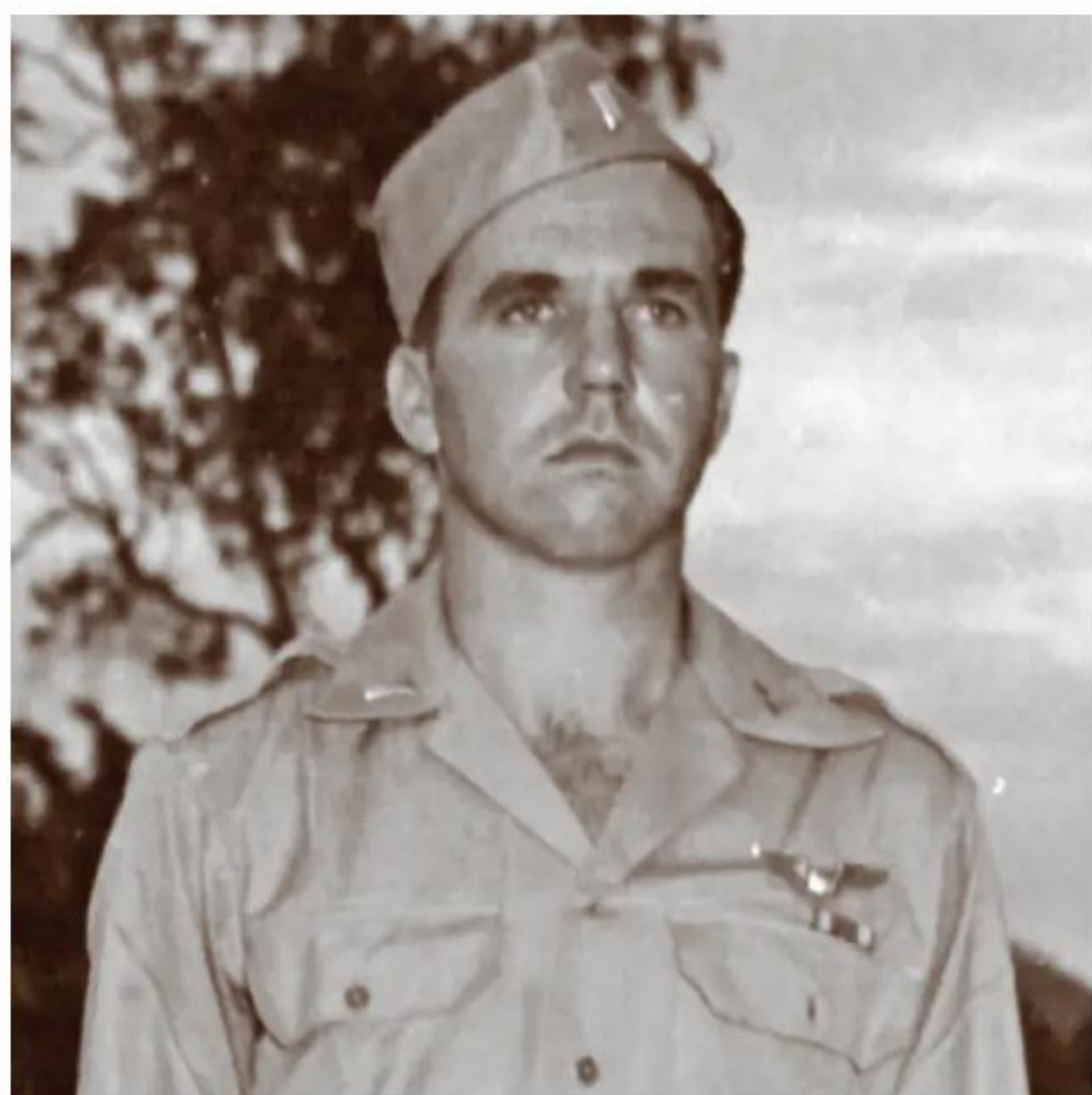
"While on a mission to intercept enemy planes pursuing one of our bombers, Lieutenant Falletta noted a flight of nine enemy fighters. He made a diving head-on attack on the two leading planes through a burst of cannon and machine gun fire and succeeded in forcing the enemy formation to change course and split up, enabling the rest of our planes to make successful attacks. Both enemy planes initially attacked by Lieutenant Falletta were last seen spinning earthwards. He then made two more attacks on separate enemy fighters, damaging both."

Despite this description of his actions and his award, Falletta received no official credits for the Zeros he reportedly hit.

The fourth of May turned out to be a particularly bad day for the 8th PG. Early that morning, a dozen Airacobras took off to again strafe the Lae airfield. The weather was miserable, however, and only four of them actually made it to their target, which they attacked from the sea, claiming to have destroyed one bomber and to have damaged four others. Four pilots failed to return from this mission, and they were all eventually found to have been killed. Second Lieutenant Pat



The 36th Squadron's Lt. Harlock Harvey right after being awarded a DFC and an Air Medal. He probably destroyed a Zero near Port Moresby on 12 May 1942.



36th PS pilot Elmer Graham shot down a Zero near Port Moresby on 13 May 1942. Here, months later, he is receiving an Oak Leaf Cluster to his previous Silver Star.

Armstrong of the 36th PS (flying P-39D-BE 41-6971) was last seen on the approach to the target, as was his squadron mate 2nd Lt. Charles Schwimmer, in 41-6956. Later that year, 14 Mile Drome near Port Moresby — also known as Laloki, the name of the river than ran by it — was renamed Schwimmer Drome, and he was awarded a posthumous Silver Star. The 35th Squadron's 1st Lt. Victor R. Talbot (in P-39F-BE 41-7145) and 2nd Lt. Jeff Hooker (flying P-39D-BE 41-6825) also disappeared. Lieutenant (jg) Junichi Sasai, CO of the Tainan *Kokutai's* 2nd *Chutai* (Squadron), claimed three P-39s that day. Sasai would be credited with 27 victories by the time he was killed in action over Guadalcanal four months later.

After this disaster, such offensive missions were suspended for a couple of weeks due to their excessive losses, the P-39's poor range, and the need to concentrate on the defense of Port Moresby and its airfields.

Unfortunately, those were not the only losses on the 4th. Later that morning, nine bombers escorted by Zeros were intercepted near Moresby by seven 35th PS P-39s that were patrolling overhead.

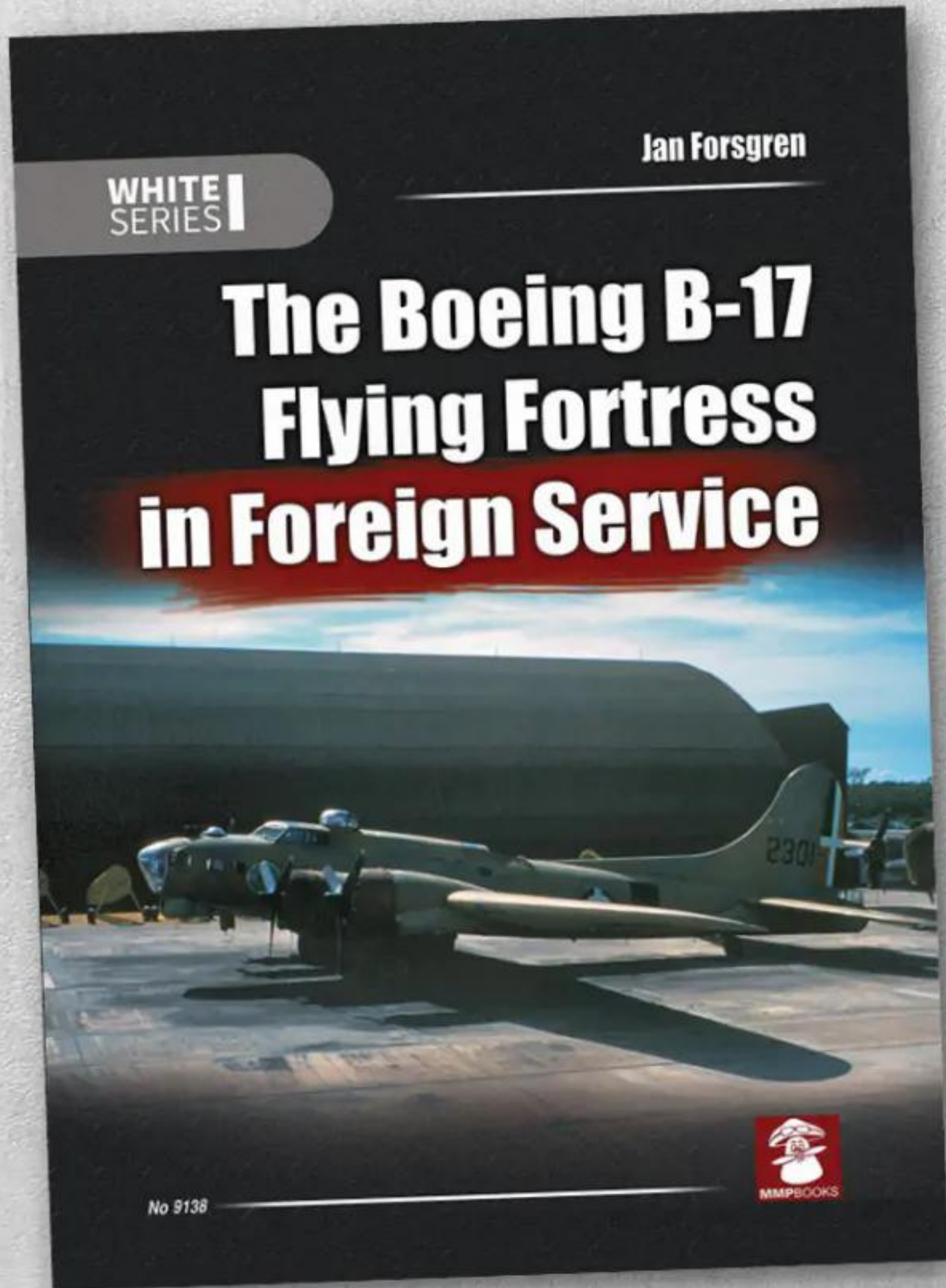


P-400 #66 *Our Friend* assigned to the 40th PS. Note the longer protruding barrel of its 20mm cannon, the four .30-caliber machine guns in its wings, and the 75-gallon drop tank.

Even though the Airacobra pilots had a height advantage, only one bomber was claimed, by 2nd Lt. Robert M. Wilde — initially as a probable, although it was later upgraded to destroyed after it was reported to have crashed. Wilde fired on it head-on and then had to dive away from two Zeros that had latched onto his tail. Second Lieutenant Harold J. Chivers, flying P-39F-BE 41-7207, was killed, while 2nd Lt. Fred G. Featherstone had experienced engine failure on takeoff and crash-landed

P-39D-BE 41-6747. Featherstone suffered a broken back, which brought his combat tour to a premature end.

The Allied forces at Port Moresby breathed a huge sigh of relief after the Battle of the Coral Sea, history's first involving aircraft carriers on both sides, which took place on 7 and 8 May southeast of Papua. An Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) task force had sought to defeat an Allied naval force in that area to prepare the way for landings at Moresby.



THOSE **FORGOTTEN FORTRESSES**

Arguably America's most famous bomber of WWII, the Boeing B-17 in USAAF service has been the subject of dozens of books. However, less than 100 Forts were operated by other air forces across the globe — ranging from Brazil to Yugoslavia. ***The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress in Foreign Service*** by Jan Forsgren tells the story of these little-known aircraft in a high-quality, heavily illustrated, softbound volume of 112 pages. The author has searched far and wide for photos of these aircraft but the book also has specially commissioned color profiles of many of these Forts while telling how the air forces obtained them and then what happened to the bombers. This is an essential addition for any library including the history of the B-17. **JUST \$32.**

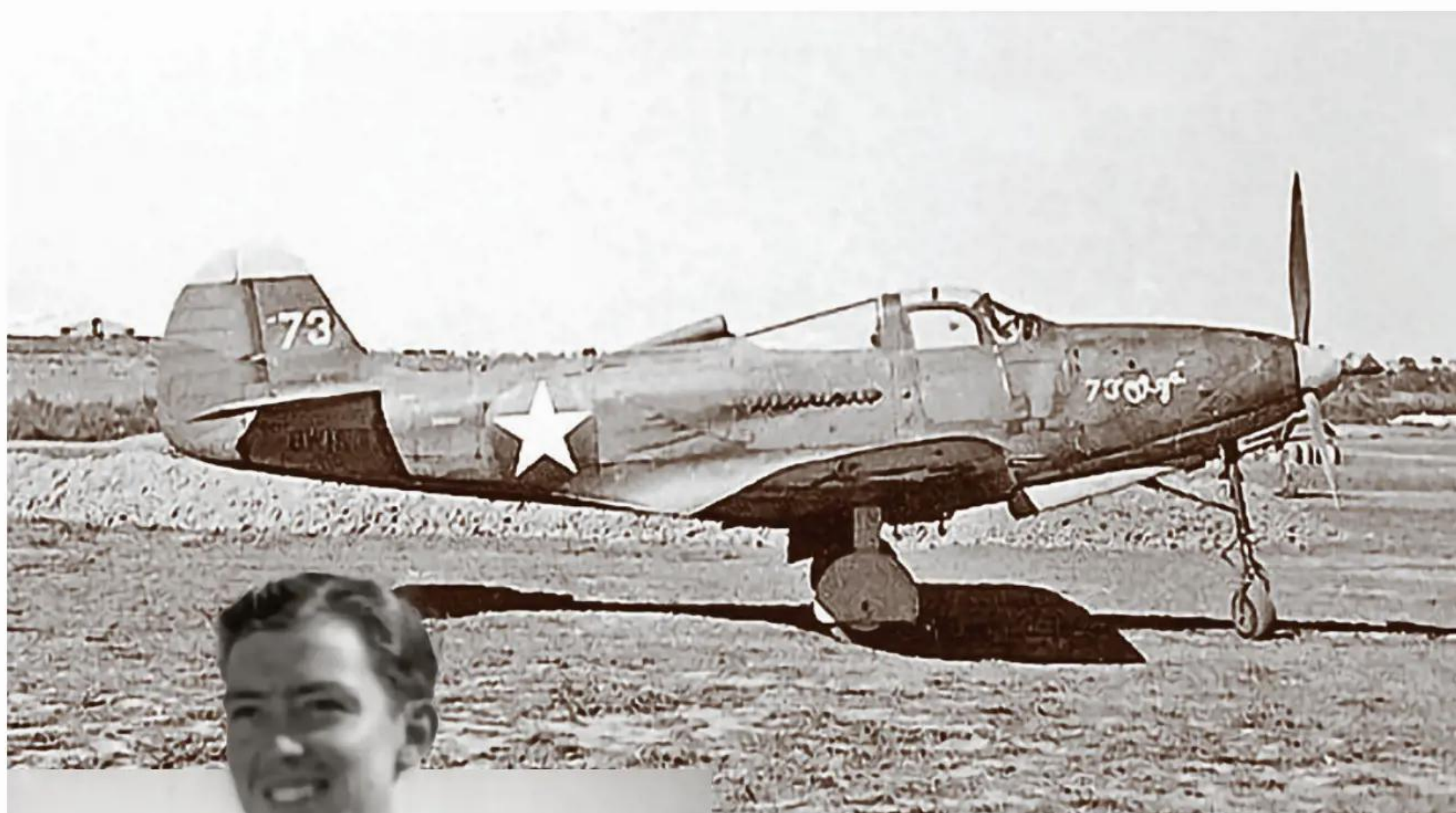
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A P-400 of the 41st FS — squadron number 73 and named *Olga*. It displays the 41st's yellow spinner and tail tip markings.

Allies. What turned out to be the enemy's only opportunity to capture that vital base from the sea had been thwarted.

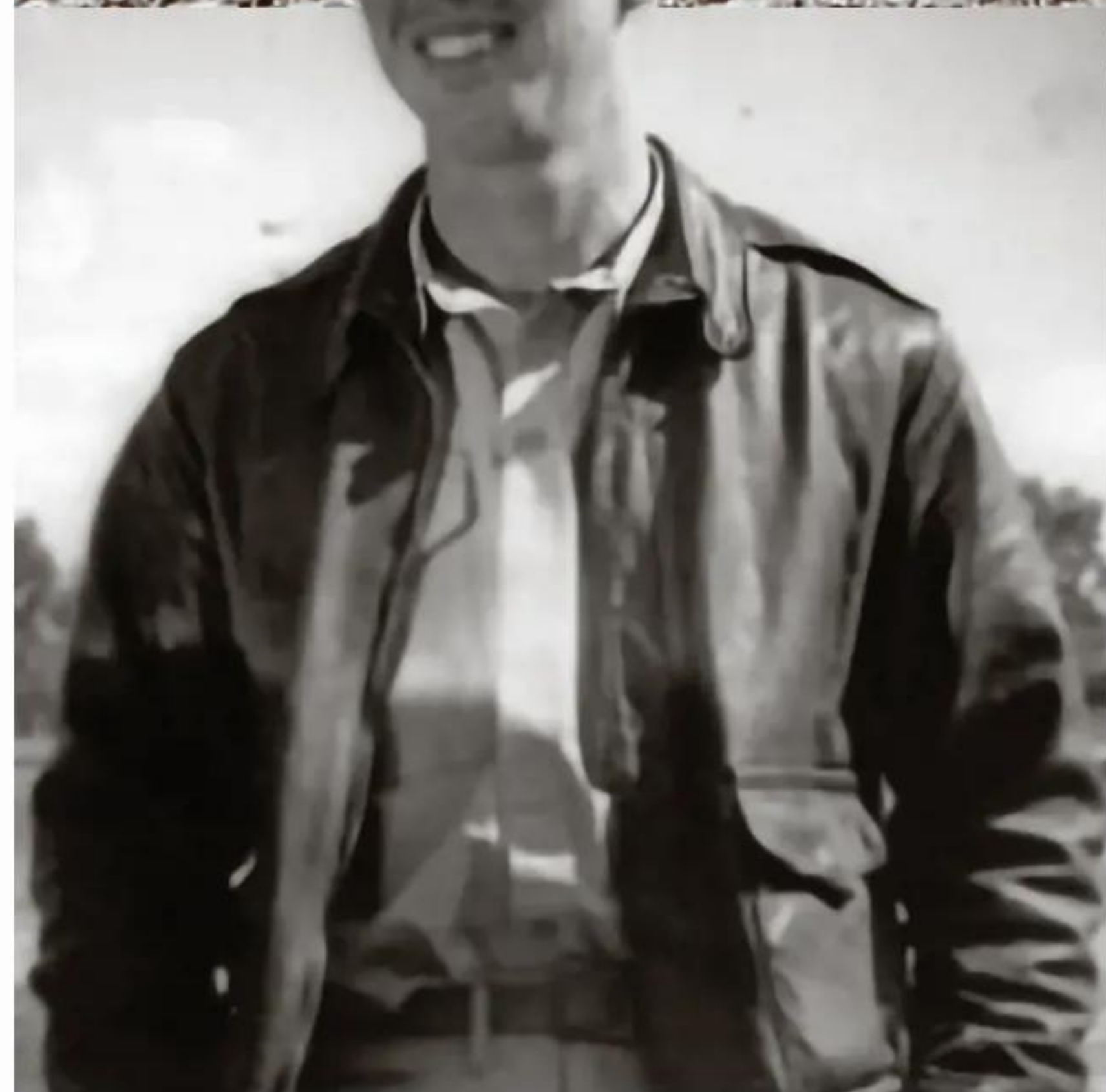
After two quiet days at Moresby the JNAF's land-based units resumed their attacks on the first day of the carrier battle. On the late morning of 7 May, a dozen Zeros strafed 7 Mile, destroying two twin-engine North American B-25 Mitchells and killing or wounding several of their crew members. Ten Airacobras took off and engaged some of the A6Ms. The only claim was by 2nd Lt. James W. Egan of the 35th PS, who attacked one that immediately commenced a steep climb. He managed to pull enough lead on it to put a burst into its belly, after which the Zero crashed into the jungle. Some ground troops came across its wreckage a few miles north of the airfield. PO1c Nishizawa

claimed a P-39 and a P-40, although there were then no Kittyhawks at Port Moresby.

Eight Zeros targeted 7 Mile Drome once again the following afternoon and were intercepted by 13 P-39s from both squadrons. The result of the ensuing fight was two Zeros credited as destroyed, one as probably destroyed, and two as damaged. The confirmed kills were by the 35th Squadron's Capt. Greene (who devastated his target's empennage with his cannon) and 2nd Lt. John W. Jacobs Jr. Their squadron mate 1st Lt. Leonard P. Marks was credited with one of the damaged and the 36th's 1st Lt. Paul Brown with the probable. Brown was chasing one of the Zeros when another dove on him from out of the sun. He turned into it and scored a few hits but then lost it after they zoomed past each other. His squadron mate Bob Yundt also damaged one of the A6Ms, which had dived on him from the rear but overshot. He hit it in the fuselage before it disappeared into a cloud.

The 36th's Charlie Falletta dove from 20,000 feet onto a pair of Zeros at 6000 feet. He claimed to have shot the tail off one of them, but it could not be confirmed so he received no credit for it.

Second Lieutenant Alva G. Hawkins' plane, P-39F-BE 41-7188, was hit by one of the Zeros and he was forced to ditch it in the sea. He was rescued uninjured and was soon back at his 35th Squadron's new airfield, 12 Mile. Hawkins had been assigned to the 80th PS in Australia but joined the 35th after ferrying a P-39 to Port Moresby. He was likely the victim



The 36th Squadron's Lt. Harlock Harvey right after being awarded a DFC and an Air Medal. He probably destroyed a Zero near Port Moresby on 12 May 1942.

Although a tactical victory for the Japanese as regards the number of ships sunk or damaged, both sides, battered and with heavy losses of aircraft, were forced to withdraw. As a result, the Port Moresby Attack Force, which was scheduled to land troops there on 10 May, was recalled—making this a strategic victory for the



A guarded aircraft salvage yard near Port Moresby, from which spare parts could be retrieved as needed. On the left is a Lockheed Hudson, on the right a Douglas A-24, and in the middle are two damaged Airacobras.



Patch for the 80th FS.

of Saburo Sakai, who claimed a P-39 and a P-40. In the heat of battle, and having been used to fighting Kittyhawks, the A6M pilots once again misidentified some of the Airacobras.

Lieutenant Jacobs was the day's hero. As he was finishing off his victim, his plane was hit by another Zero, shattering its canopy and severely wounding him. He then managed to evade the enemy fighter, but had a vital decision to make. Although his P-39 was shot up, its engine was still running smoothly and all the controls seemed to be working. However, he was bleeding profusely and knew that if he bailed out, he probably would not survive. On the other hand, if he continued flying, he could pass out from loss of blood. He chose the latter course and flew out over the sea until the enemy had departed and then landed at 7 Mile. Jacobs had to be lifted out of his plane and into an ambulance. He had obviously earned a Purple Heart but was also awarded a Silver Star for this mission, as was its leader, Ben Greene.

The Zeros were back on the morning of the ninth, 16 of them strafing 3 and 7 Mile Dromes and destroying two B-25s and a P-39 on the latter. A crew chief was killed and some other enlisted men wounded. The Airacobra was being taxied for takeoff by the 36th Squadron's 1st Lt. Grover D. Gholson Jr. when it was literally shot in two by a Zero's fire. Gholson, who quickly jumped out of the cockpit and took shelter under a wing, miraculously escaped injury.

Six 36th PS P-39s were already



The 40th FS' Harvey Scandrett (now a major) in the process of being awarded an Air Medal, a DFC and a Silver Star by Gen. Kenney. He had shot down a Zero over Port Moresby on 17 May 1942. Then-Lt. Col. Scandrett was Deputy CO of the P-51-equipped 506th FG on Iwo Jima when he was killed in a weather-related accident on 1 June 1945.



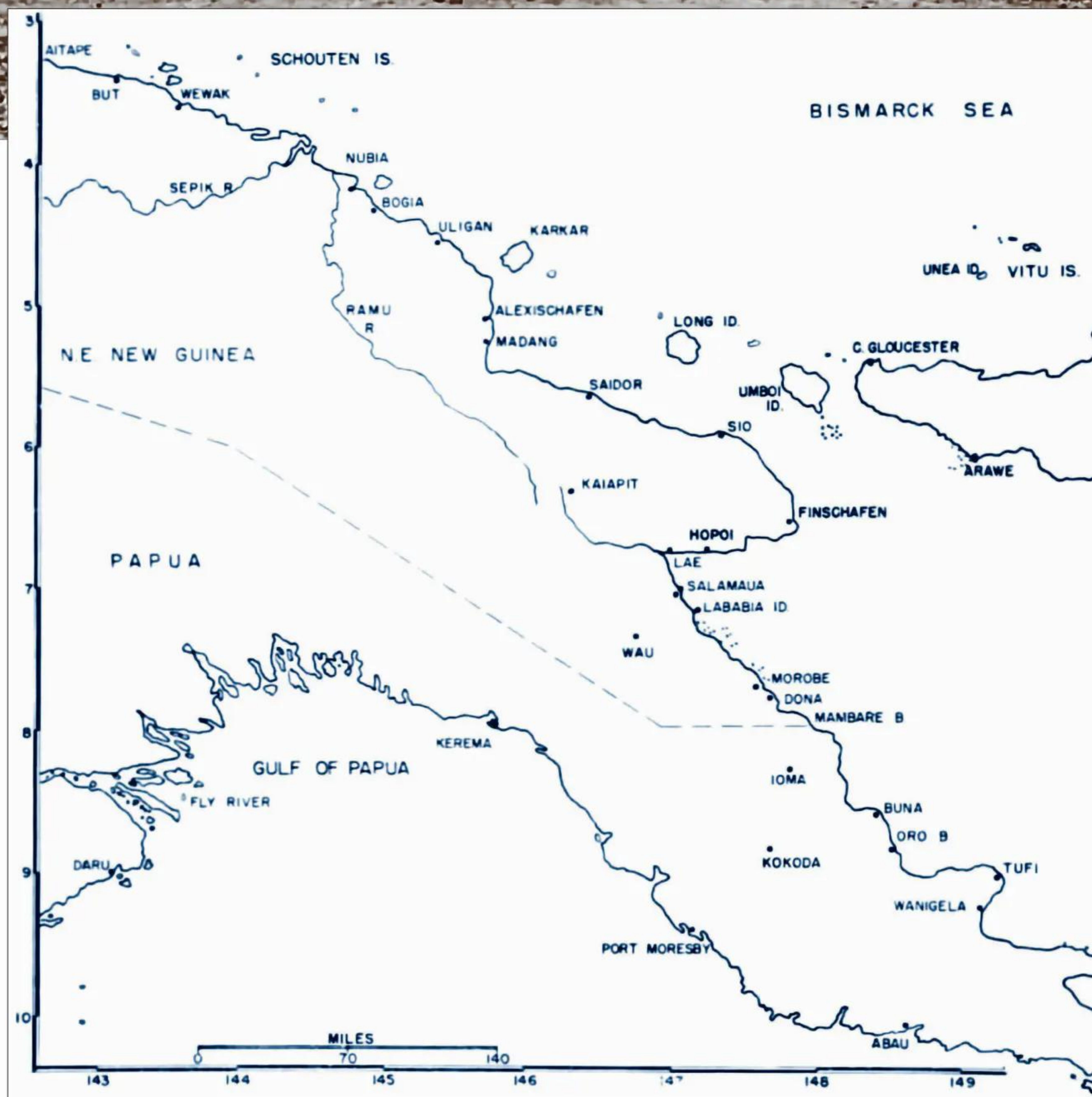
Two unidentified 5th AF P-400 crew members pose with their plane. Note the pilot's Mae West hanging on the door.

airborne and Capt. Robert L. Harriger and 2nd Lt. Bill Bennett were each credited with shooting down one of the Zeros. When Bennett landed at 3 Mile Drome his nosewheel collapsed. Don McGee was hit by "friendly" AA fire over 7 Mile and crash-landed his plane, P-39D-BE 41-6800, on a nearby island.

On the early morning of 10 May, some 35th PS pilots intercepted ten Zeros over Port Moresby. Second Lieutenant John R. Casey Jr. and 1st Lt. Buck Erickson made several passes at them without any obvious results. On *his* third pass, Lt. Marks hit one that was reportedly last seen spinning down toward the sea with heavy smoke pouring from its engine. It was credited to him as destroyed — as was the A6M Capt. McGovern hit that supposedly was last

seen in an uncontrolled spin.

This was 1st Lt. Norman G. Morris' first combat, having arrived from Australia three days earlier. Morris' flight was on patrol when he spotted the Zeros below. He and his wingman dove on two of them, but they were evidently spotted, as the Japanese pilots immediately split up. Morris took the one on the left and was just about to open fire when it suddenly turned to the left and climbed almost vertically, then commenced a loop. This was a maneuver an Airacobra could not follow, as Capt. Morris quickly learned as he tried to do so. When his plane stalled out, the Zero quickly turned around and the pursuer became the pursued. He then lowered his nose in an attempt to outrun the Zero in a dive, but it was already in



Rabaul, located on the east end of the huge island of New Britain, was where many of the bombers and fighters that attacked Port Moresby were based, including the Tainan *Kokutai*'s Zeros. On this map can be seen the eastern tip of New Britain, near Cape Gloucester, and its location relative to New Guinea.

range and opened fire. Morris skidded left and right in uncoordinated maneuvers to throw off the A6M pilot's aim, while tracers whizzed by his cockpit. As he neared the surface of the sea, he had to pull up sharply to avoid crashing into it. He was anticipating being hit when he saw the Zero turn away from him, evidently out of ammunition. It had been a close call!

Due to a lack of sufficient warning, an attack by 19 twin-engine Mitsubishi G3M

bombers of the Genzan *Kokutai* on 7 Mile the next day met no opposition in the air. Six 36th Squadron P-39s were damaged by their bombs, and one ground crewman was killed.

Port Moresby's air defense *was* ready, however, when eleven Tainan *Kokutai* Zeros appeared overhead on the early morning of the 12th. They encountered 23 Airacobras, including five 35th PS ships that had taken off from 12 Mile. The only

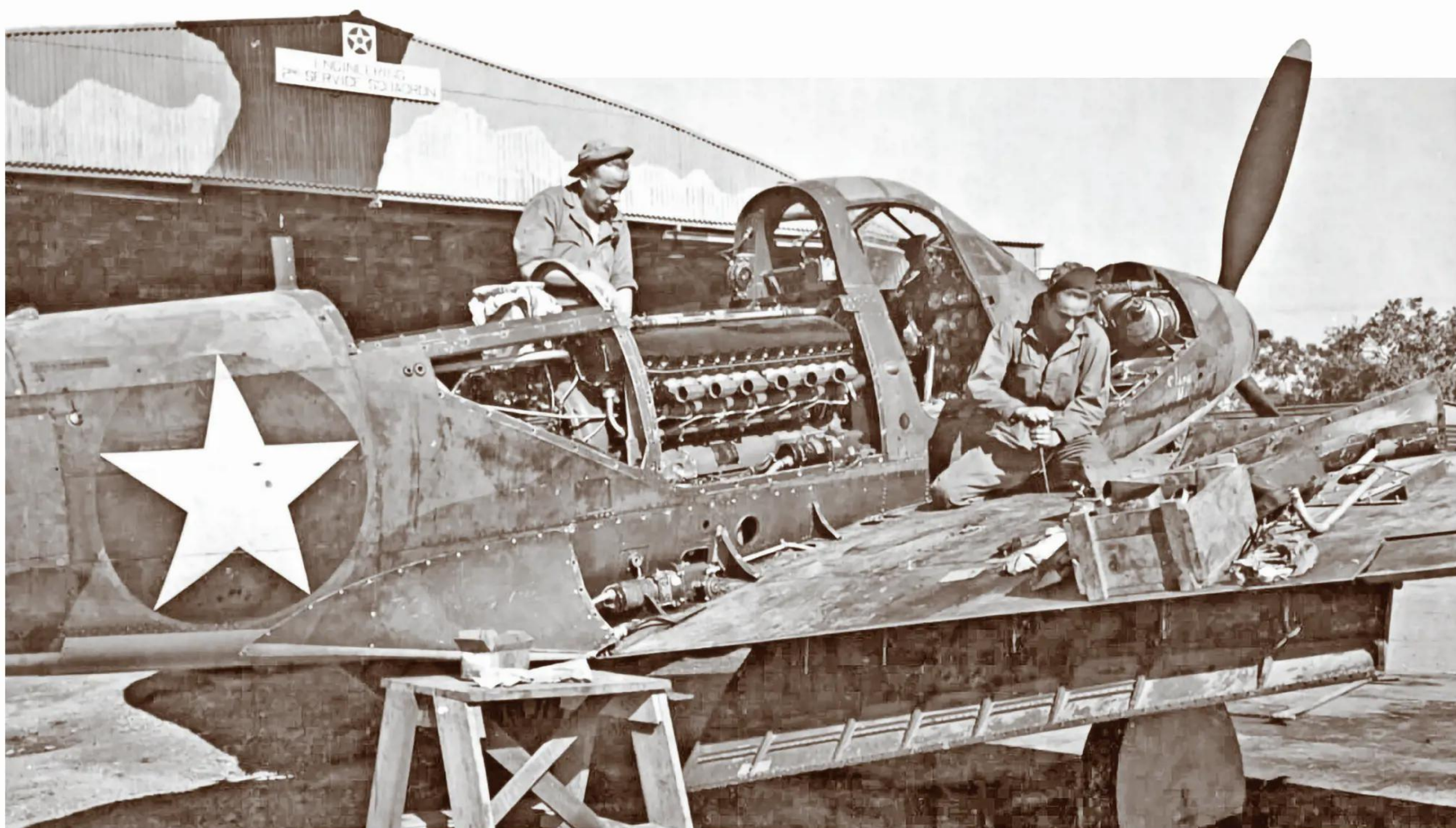
P-400 #41 of the 40th FS is being worked on at one of Port Moresby's airfields.

pilot of that squadron to score was 2nd Lt. Bob Wilde, who was flying P-39D-BE 41-6802. He shot down one of the Zeros, but *his* plane was then seen plummeting into the jungle, trailing black smoke. Wilde's body was recovered two months later — and he was awarded a posthumous DSC.

Wilde's squadron mate Alva Hawkins' plane was badly damaged and he crash-landed it on a nearby island. He returned two days later, uninjured. Two 36th Squadron pilots also managed to score. Captain Falletta was credited with a destroyed and a damaged and 1st Lt. Harlock W. "Walt" Harvey with a probable. The body of Falletta's victim was also recovered, which certainly confirmed his victory. The A6M pilots claimed to have shot down *six* P-39s in these actions — three by Lt. (jg) Sasai, two by PO1c Nishizawa, and one by PO1c Sakai.

The constant air raids took their toll on the morale of both the pilots and the non-flying personnel. Especially frustrating was Port Moresby's unreliable air raid warning system, which consisted of spotters at posts in various locations between Lae and Moresby who reported their observations by radio telephone. It often did not allow the P-39 pilots time to reach an effective altitude, which left them at a distinct disadvantage — or even unable to take off, or the men on the ground time to take shelter.

The Zeros were back on the 13th — just six of them this time — and they



USAAF mechanics of the 4th Air Depot's 2nd Service Squadron at Garbutt Field in Australia working on an Airacobra's Allison V-1710 engine and its wing fuel tank.

were met by an equal number of 35th PS Airacobras, plus two more from the 36th. Only the 36th Squadron pilots scored, however, Capt. Paul Brown and 1st Lt. Elmer F. Grahm each downing a Zero. One of their victims was Petty Officer 3rd Class (PO3c) Toshiaki Honda, who was killed, while his compatriot Hiroyoshi Nishizawa claimed two P-39s.

The leader of the 35th Squadron flight, 1st Lt. Hervey B. Carpenter, had to crash-land his aircraft, P-39D-BE 41-6945, which had been shot up by one of the Zero pilots (most likely Nishizawa), but he returned to 12 Mile Drome the following day, unhurt. The Zeros also hit a twin-engine Martin B-26 Marauder that was coming in for a landing, which likewise crashed.

The Tainan *Kokutai* pilots returned on the early morning of 14 May. As 15 of them began to strafe 7 Mile, the 36th PS' Capt. Brown led five other Airacobras in a bounce. He hit the last Zero in a string of eight (flown by PO1c Toru Oshima) with a single burst but then had to pull up sharply to avoid a collision and his plane knocked off part of its tail, whereupon it crashed into the jungle.

The 36th's Capt. Bevlock was leading seven more P-39s that attacked another group of Zeros. Bevlock, Capt. Falletta, and 1st Lts. Harvey and Andrew A. Cook all reportedly hit at least one without doing any serious damage, and none of them received an official credit. Lieutenant

Gholson struck another that fell away with smoke pouring from its engine, and Bob Yundt also hit one. These two pilots were credited with destroying *their* victims.

The first 39th PS pilots to see action had volunteered to fly temporarily with the 35th PS at Port Moresby to replace its losses and to gain combat experience, while some 40th PS pilots did the same with the 36th. Five 39th Squadron pilots flew from Townsville to Moresby on 16 May and saw their first action the following day. According to the 39th's diarist:

"A flight of four in two-ship elements took off on an interception mission. When at an altitude of 11,000 feet a flight of five 'O' fighters were sighted at the same level 90 degrees left flying in a Lufbery. Our flight maneuvered for position and attacked head-on. The enemy executed an Immelman giving them a position up the rear of our A/C [aircraft] and attempted pursuit. The result of the engagement was nil."

Seventeen Tainan *Kokutai* Zeros had taken off from Lae that morning, one of which aborted *en route* to Port Moresby. They strafed 7 Mile Drome but were driven off by some P-39s. They then targeted 12 Mile (also called Bomana, after a nearby village) and shipping in the harbor. Some .50-caliber AA gunners at 12 Mile claimed to have hit two of the Zeros, which were seen to be smoking as they

left the area. Not perhaps coincidentally, Lt.(jg) Kaoru Yamaguchi crashed into the foothills of the Owen Stanley Mountains on his way home and was killed, while PO2c Tsutomu Ito force-landed nearby and was later captured.

Sixteen P-39s from the 35th and 36th PSs intercepted the Zeros. Their only confirmed kill was scored by 1st Lt. Harvey J. Scandrett of the 40th PS, who was TDY (on temporary duty) with the 36th, led by Paul Brown. This was the first victory by a 35th PG pilot. Brown damaged a Zero before his own plane (P-39F-BE 41-7171) was hit and he had to ditch it in the sea, as did his squadron mate 2nd Lt. Jesse M. Bland with 41-7122. Both pilots survived and were rescued uninjured. The Zero pilots claimed six P-39s destroyed in this action — five by Nishizawa and one (plus a probable) by Sakai.

Offensive Airacobra missions had resumed that morning, when a relatively uneventful reconnaissance and strafing mission was flown to the Salamaua area. While the 8th PG's pilots had been flying P-39Ds and Fs from Port Moresby, the 35th's then mostly flew P-400s, and the 8th had begun to receive some as well as replacements. All three models saw some action that day, though it should be noted that the P-400s were usually referred to as P-39s.

AC

(TO BE CONTINUED)

TWILIGHT WARBIRDS

A NEW TYPE OF AIRSHOW ATTRACTION IS CAPTURING INTEREST —
FLYING HISTORIC AIRCRAFT AT AND AFTER SUNSET
BY DAVID HORN



Beautiful half-moon sets off a flight of two Lockheed Lightnings, a Curtiss Warhawk, and a North American Mustang.



Allied Fighters Lockheed Lightning comes in for a low pass as the background sky begins darken.

The recent California Capitol Airshow in Sacramento featured an exciting display of Warbirds flying at or after sunset. This type of activity allows spectators to watch these aircraft during the cooler temperatures of the day while the setting sun highlights the planes and their maneuvers. Bernie Vasquez was photographed piloting Walter Bowe's Mustang during a low pass with the last rays of the sun reflecting off the polished metal. However, photographing these aircraft in the evening brings forth an entirely new set of problems.



Polished metal surfaces of the Mustang catch the last of the evening twilight.



With afterburner lit and
Smokewinders on, Jason Soames
performs an aerobatic routine in his
MiG 17.



Allied Fighters Lightning lifts off to perform its evening flight routine.



Steve Hinton lifts off in the Bearcat to take part in the evening flight schedule.

Bernie Vasquez rolling the Mustang in front of the spectators.



Steve Hinton in the Planes of Fame Bearcat forms up with a US Navy Super Hornet for a fly-by.

AC



Eric Presten rolls the Piper Clipper in on a heading prior to touchdown on a northern California lake. The large amphibious floats decrease top speed of the classic a bit.

MAIDEN LOCK HAVEN

WITH ITS SEVEN DIFFERENT GEAR CONFIGURATIONS
ERIC PRESTEN'S CLASSIC PIPER PA-16 CLIPPER CAN BE
SUMMED UP WITH ONE WORD — UNIQUE!

BY ROGER CAIN

When Eric Presten takes his 1949 Piper PA-16 Clipper out for a leisurely flight, the craft is guaranteed to attract attention at any airport. Named *Maiden Lock Haven* after its birthplace at the Piper factory in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, Presten currently has the Clipper on a set of Murphy amphibious floats. This is just one of seven (!) configurations for takeoff and landing that Presten has for this unique Clipper. This year also celebrates the PA-16's 75th birthday. A very maneuverable airplane with its short wings and long ailerons, the Clipper is perfect for going in and out of short fields. Good visibility over the nose and toe brakes helps with this kind of activity. Different from most classic aircraft, the Clipper is also one of the few four-place airplanes that has a stick control system.

With the end of the war, Piper found itself in a difficult financial position. Military contracts were stopped and the few new designs the company had were simply not working out (see this month's "Down Memory's Runway"). The post-war market wanted new planes and the company's "bread and butter" J-3 was certainly anything but new. Plus, there were plenty of surplus L-4s (the military variant of the J-3) and other ex-military surplus light aircraft available at cheap prices.

So, how could the company get itself out of the financial hole? A decision was made to use much of the material on hand in the factory to create a

"new" aircraft — the PA-15 Vagabond. The Vagabond got rid of the Cub's tandem seating in favor of a side-by-side configuration, something that had become more popular. This meant a new steel tube fuselage but this was easily constructed by Piper's skilled workforce. Cub components that could be utilized included the tail, landing gear, and most of the wing panels. Piper designers decided to eliminate one wing bay to create a shorter wing — 30 feet for the Vagabond compared to 36 feet for the Cub. This also gave the plane a racier look and led to the term "Short Wing Piper" that would describe a new generation of light aircraft.

Making its first flight on 3 November 1947, production Vagabonds began delivery in January



Imperious Juan Trippe did not like the fact Piper used the name Clipper — thus making the aircraft a limited production machine that was built for just one year. The "Clipper globe" is on display in the Smithsonian.



The amphibious floats make for easy taxiing on paved runways such as Schellville Airport. This is the only short-wing Piper certificated with amphibious floats.

1948 with considerable publicity in an already overcrowded market. However, the Vagabond offered simplicity combined with tradition and the compact little aircraft found a steady market. Powered by a Lycoming O-145 four-cylinder engine of 65-hp, the Vagabond could achieve 100-mph. The fact that Piper did not have to absorb much in the way of new design costs

combined with in-stock items helped to turn the bottom line from red into black and pull Piper back from the brink of disaster.

The PA-15 was quickly followed by the PA-17, which was an improved variant. Fitted with a Continental A-65-8, also of 65-hp, the PA-17 had dual controls (actually control sticks — handy for the many flight schools

cropping up because of the GI Bill), and bungee cord shock-absorbing landing gear compared to the solid gear of the PA-15. First flying in 1949, Piper would build 601 Vagabonds of both variants.

Now, what could the company do to improve on the Vagabond while still keeping production costs as low as possible? Piper decided the market



The Clipper was featured on the July 1949 cover of Skyways magazine.

Clipper on the step at Lake Berryessa.

needed an aircraft that could carry more than two people. By stretching the basic Vagabond fuselage some 17 inches and adding an extra door, the company found that the new PA-16 could be advertised as a four-seater. However, real world use described the aircraft as more of a “2.5 or three-seater.” Once again, the new steel tube fuselage could be built quickly and efficiently. Power would come from a Lycoming O-235 of 115-hp that offered a top speed of 125-mph (it should be noted that various literature and performance figures of the time period varied a bit on top speed).

Numerous detail modifications also improved performance. The company added a new wing fuel tank along with the extra door to list the newly-named Clipper at \$2995 (about \$38,100 today, so it was not exactly cheap) but this enabled Piper to state that the new four-seat Clipper was much lower than the standard four-seaters from other companies that averaged around \$5000 (about \$66,000 today). However, there was trouble ahead.

The imperious Juan Trippe of Pan American World Airways saw the name “Clipper” and went through the roof. Clipper was the term applied to airline’s famed big airliners that offered outstanding global service, but at a price. The last thing Trippe wanted to see was the Clipper name applied to a little aerial run-about offered at an economy price. Trippe held an unusual amount of influence with the US government and Pan American was regarded as “the chosen instrument” when it came to American airlines — meaning that the government would go out of its way to give Trippe what he wanted. The airline’s lawyers quickly jumped on Piper and the Pennsylvania company folded in fear of the mighty Pan Am. Struggling to keep its head above water, the last thing Piper wanted was to go to war with Juan Trippe. Piper agreed to stop production of the Clipper and thus only 736 were built in 1949. Certainly, Trippe could have been gracious and allowed Piper the use of the name “Clipper” (one immediately wonders if he tried to get the term “clipper ships” removed from the globe-circling



Eric Presten with his very well-traveled Clipper.



William Piper with one of his J-3s at Lock Haven. Post-war, the short-wing Pipers would help the company survive.



Eric slides the Clipper in next to the camera plane to display the large Goodyear Air Wheels.

sailing vessels). Once again, some quick thinking would bring out yet another Piper revision that would allow the company's doors to stay open but that is outside the scope of this article.

Eric bought his Clipper in March 1990 and for most of the next decade, he worked on it and flew the PA-16 regularly. Then came the decision to completely rebuild the Clipper from nose to tail and this would result in a 3.5-year grounding. In 2002, Presten finished the full restoration and around the same time he decided to build-up a pair of Murphy A-1800 amphibious floats to install on the Clipper. This was done because he had intentions of touring the



The Clipper makes a pass over the dry California landscape with the standard wheel pants mounted. This is the aircraft's usual gear set-up when not on one of the others.



Mississippi River by air. In 2003, he did just that. Accompanied by his family of three, they departed their home airport at Sonoma Skypark in northern California and flew north to Washington state. From that point, they departed with a group of friends to the Experimental Aircraft Association's annual AirVenture at Oshkosh.

From Oshkosh, it was on to Lake Itasca in the neighboring state of Minnesota. This is where the first trickles of the Mississippi River begin and from there, they flew the river's entire curvy route through New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico. The Mississippi River flight covered 2556



We didn't want to show this photo to Eric in case he got any ideas on what he needs to add next to his collection. Goodyear created this traveling exhibit to display the "world's largest" air wheel.



Charging across the snow at Quincy Airport on the Federal skis.

SPECIFICATIONS PIPER PA-16 CLIPPER	
Span	30-ft
Length	20-ft 1-in
Height	6-ft 2-in
Weight Empty	850-lbs
Weight Gross	1650-lbs
Max Speed	125-mph
Cruise Speed	117-mph
Stall Speed	50-mph
Range	480-mi
Climb	580-fpm
Ceiling	11,000-ft
Powerplant	Lycoming O-235/115-hp

miles in eleven days. After viewing the many oil platforms situated on the Gulf, they flew west to Houston and then across the Front Range to Washington again, before returning to California for a total of 105 hours in the air.

The Clipper's gross weight falls in at 1650 pounds for all configurations — except with amphibious floats. The plane is certified with a second gross weight for the floats at 1738 pounds and cruises at about 115-mph. Presten received a one-time FAA approval for the Murphy floats (the construction of which comprised some 14,000 rivets dipped in Proseal and about 2000

Clipper airborne with Federal clamp-on aluminum skis. Note the period-correct snowshoes and bamboo ski poles.

hours of construction and rigging time). Designed in Chilliwack, British Columbia, for the Murphy Rebel bush plane, the floats translate very well to the Clipper. The PA-16 was originally approved for float operations on a set of EDO 88-1650 floats, but those are too small for the airplane's seaplane gross weight.

Presten also has a rare set of Whitaker tandem wheels. Tandem wheel landing gear had been experimented with on Benny Howard's racer *Ike* in the 1930s in an attempt to reduce drag while there were also many other attempts to create a landing gear that could handle a variety of terrain. Following WWII, Verl Buroker was employed as a pilot for Art Whitaker, who was the northwest's largest Piper Aircraft dealer. Verl, after visiting many small fields with the Piper J-3 and PA-11 Cubs, saw a need for wheels that could land and takeoff from rough fields without nosing over. After several experimental concepts, Buroker came up with a new tandem wheel design. Working with Whitaker, a prototype



Restored Call-Air wooden skis fitted to the Clipper.

set was manufactured in Whitaker's shop at Portland, Oregon, and testing began shortly thereafter. With the success of the tandem wheels, the Civil Aeronautics Administration approval was received and manufacturing began around 1947.

Designed originally for Whitaker's Piper sales business, the gear later

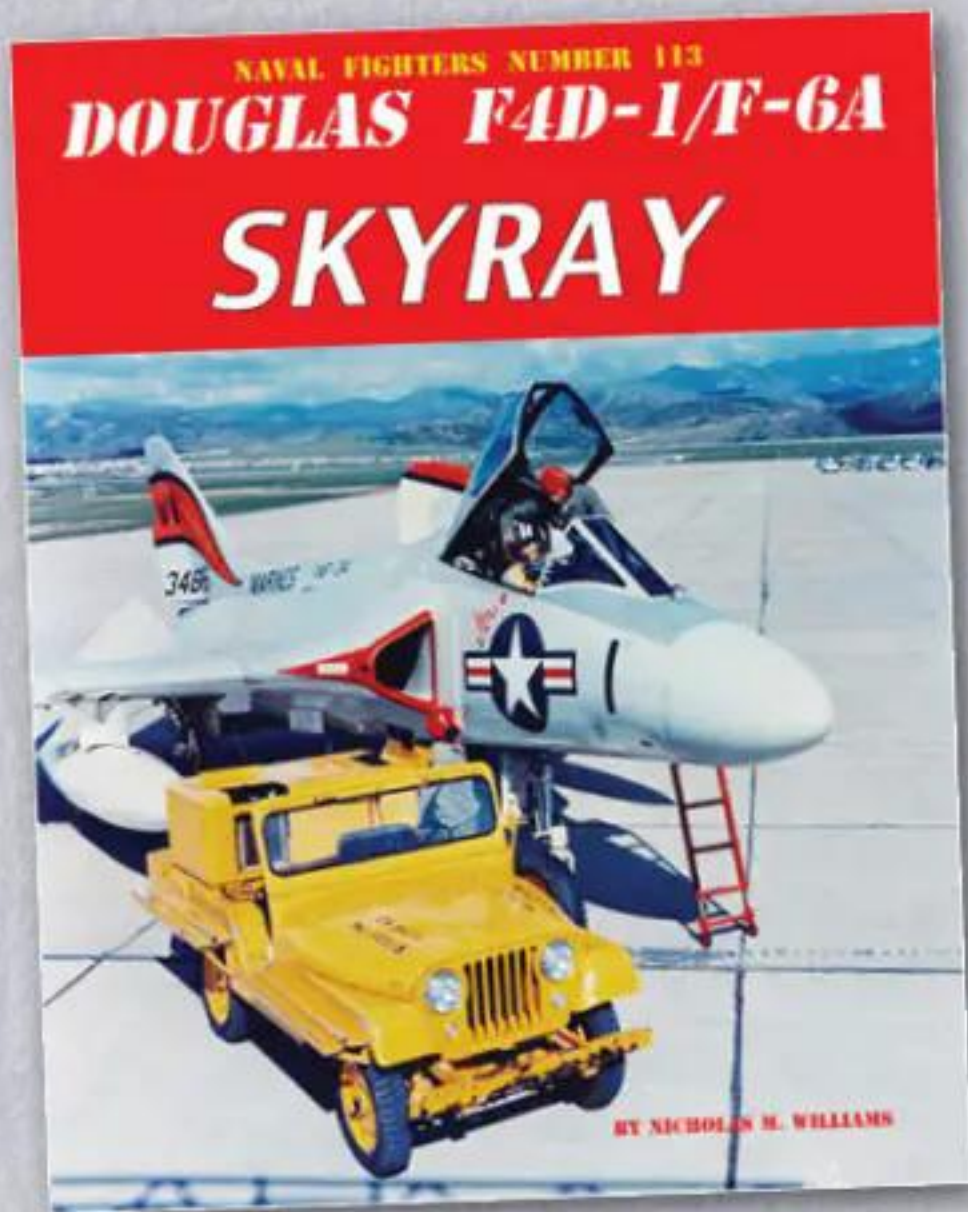
found its way onto Aeroncas, Call-Airs, Stinsons, and Cessna 170s. Unfortunately for Whitaker, at about the same time the creation of the larger bush and tundra tires came about and the tandem wheels were nearly lost to history. In the early 1950s, several sets were tested by the US Army on Cessna L-19 Bird Dogs (Model 305) operating



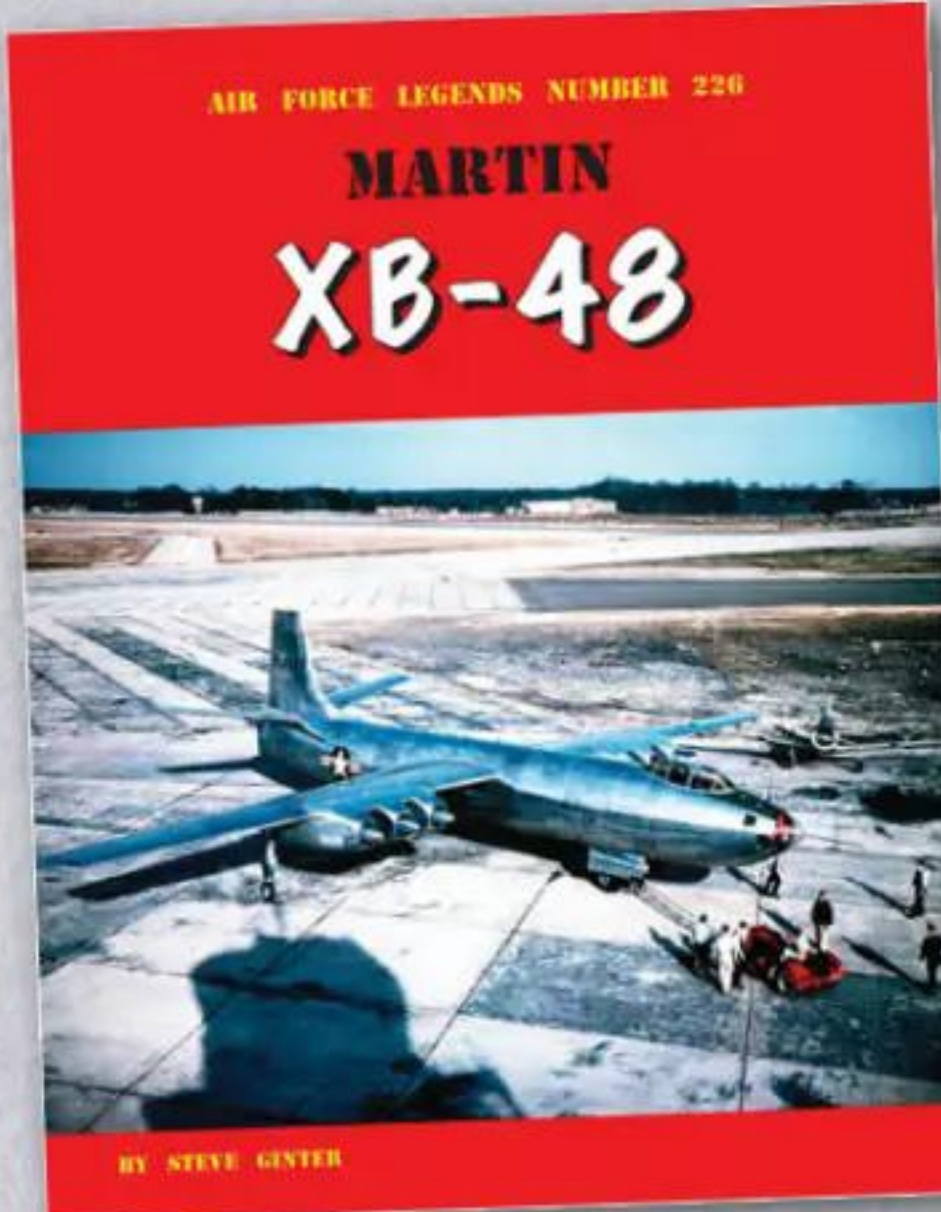
Maiden Lock Haven's extremely simple (and radio-free) panel. Note the twin control sticks.

off rough terrain. Testing was done at Fort Rucker in Alabama; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and with the Army's Arctic Test Branch in Alaska for winter operations. Following these trials, around 100 sets were ordered for operational use. Altogether, around 500 sets were built, and while they work great on rough fields, they also render

INTO THE JET AGE



BAT OUTTA HELL! Just-published **Douglas F4D-1/F-6A Skyray** by Nicholas M. Williams examines the radical tailless Skyray that combined pioneering work by Jack Northrop and Germany's Alexander Lippisch. Using captured German data, the F4D looked like nothing else in the sky — and outperformed its US Air Force rivals in speed and climb. Armed with four 20mm cannon and rockets, the Skyray's history has been neglected up until now and this 256-page, very heavily illustrated softbound book is printed on high quality paper to illustrate the 29 Navy squadrons and eleven US Marine squadrons and units that operated the type. Packed with facts, this definitive history is **\$62**.



MARTIN'S EXPERIMENTAL BOMBER **Martin XB-48** by Steve Ginter tells of the USAAF proposal during 1944 to create a jet bomber that could take the battle to Japan if the war continued. Convair created the XB-46, Boeing the XB-47, and North American the XB-45. Martin's XB-48 was relatively conventional in appearance (except for the "bicycle" landing gear) and had three turbojets mounted on each straight wing panel. The bomb bay was designed to carry a massive 22,000-lb "Grand Slam" bomb. This 48-page softbound book examines the XB-48 with detailed photos and drawings while also describing how it lost out to the B-45 and B-47. **JUST \$32**.

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Detail view of the Whitaker gear.



Running up the engine in the grass at Sonoma Skypark. In this photo, the Clipper has stock tires and wheels. The FAA states that a bit over 300 Clippers are still registered.

Installation of the Whitaker tandem wheels gives the Clipper an entirely different look.

the aircraft's brakes less than 50% effective, and are very hard to turn on the ground.

The Whitaker gear assembly is mounted to the normal wheel axle and has bungee cords and safety cables on each end to keep them from spinning. Upon landing, the rear tires contact the ground first and they hang at an angle similar to the gear on a Boeing 747. The Whitaker gear straightens the plane out very quickly but at slow taxi speeds they make sharp turns extremely difficult. With the Whitaker GW-100 series on the Clipper, and power coming from a 150-hp Lycoming O-320, Presten's Piper flies at about 122-mph, compared to its usual cruise speed of 130-mph on standard gear.

And, of course, to compare them with the Whitaker gear, Presten obtained a set of vintage 25x11x4 Goodyear Air Wheels (bush tires) that are mounted on Piper Cub wheels with the original brakes, and are usually inflated to around 8-psi. At this pressure, they easily traverse rough ground and rocks up to six-inches in size. For a short field takeoff, the wheels can be inflated to 35-psi. As there are no dates of manufacture on these tires, he can only guess as to the year of production. However, they were being produced when NC5875H rolled

off the line in 1949. The Air Wheels are installed on the Clipper through the use of the original CAA certification standards for the PA-16.

Presten has standard wheels for the Clipper and these are a pair of 8.00-4s, which are original to the plane. They are enclosed by a set of wheel pants that are fiberglass replicas of the original Consolidair Model 17 pants. The replicas are both lighter and much stronger than the originals and this is useful for Presten's rough field flying.

For winter flying, Quincy in northern California is one of his favorite target airports for snow. Presten has a set of clamp-on wooden wheel skis and a set of aluminum Federal skis. The wooden skis were originally built by the Call-Air Aircraft Company in Afton, Wyoming, during February 1947 as the Model S1, and were not very expensive in comparison to the aluminum skis that were also available at the time. The advantage of the wooden skis is that they don't freeze to the ground like the aluminum skis. Unlike regular aircraft skis that slide onto the axles, the clamp-on type



Ben Presten and his Clipper *Calypso* with Whitaker gear while Eric is flying wing with *Maiden Lock Haven* on amphibious floats.

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High-angle view of the Clipper shows the skylight that has been installed to improve visibility and safety. The plane is being flown in its standard configuration of stock tires and wheel pants.

Eric airborne in his wing-warping Bleriot reproduction.



skis leave the original tires mounted. A helper just lifts one wing at a time and slips the skis on underneath them. There is no need to remove wheels or their bearings, and this process only takes about five minutes to go from skis to wheels or vice versa. Cruise speed with the skis tends to be around 112-mph. The tail ski significantly improves ground handling.

In the summer of 2004, Presten purchased a 1946 open-cockpit Schweizer SGU 2-22 glider when his sons Ben and Curtis were eight- and nine-years-old with the hopes that, when they were older, they would continue their interest in aircraft and learn to fly. This required a new addition to the Clipper — a certified Schweizer tow-hook so he could tow and release the glider above the beautiful green hills of the Sonoma and Napa Valleys. Both Ben and Curtis soloed the Schweizer on their 14th birthdays with prior training from Andy Smith, and were towed by the Clipper. Both boys also soloed the family's Aeronca 7BCM Champion on their 16th birthdays. To save weight, Eric's Clipper doesn't have radios or a starter, thus the tail hook works great for safety when hand-propping the engine.

Following in his dad's footsteps, Eric's son Ben, now 28, also bought a PA-16 Clipper in March 2021. This aircraft also has a 150-hp Lycoming O-320 rather than the stock Lycoming O-235 and the pair really enjoy flying

their Clippers together.

Eric Presten was born in Fremont, California, during 1963, and obtained his private pilot's license while still a teenager. In 1987, Eric earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Aviation Technology from Central Missouri State University. Since that time, he has acquired his single- and multi-engine instrument commercial land ratings, Part 135 seaplane qualifications, and is also a licensed A&P with an inspection authorization. He has owned 23 aircraft, flown in over 900 aircraft consisting of 313 different types, and soloed 254 aircraft of 123 different types. He has authored several books in a series called *Vintage Flyers* on vintage aircraft identity, and ferries aircraft to buyers around the country along with occasional film work and test flying new restorations. To his recent credits, he won the Mayor's Trophy at Merced in 2000 for his 1931 Salmson-powered Russell and "Best Piper" at the 2002 AirVenture for the PA-16. Besides the Clipper and his Bucker Bu 131 *Jungmann* (*Air Classics* June 2024), he also built and flies a full-scale wing-warping Bleriot XI replica, that is powered by an Australian-built Rotec radial engine. The Bleriot is currently on display in at the Rowland Freedom Center Museum at Nut Tree Airport in Vacaville, California.

Special thanks to Jerry Anderson, and Tom Palmer who acted as camera plane pilots to make this article possible. **AC**



STORY OF A WASP



American Fly Girl by Susan Tate Ankeny (Citadel, ISBN 978-0806542829, \$28) is a hardcover 272-page biography of Hazel Ying

Lee who became enthralled with aviation during the 1930s and went on to become the first Asian American female to achieve a pilot's license. However, that was not good enough for Hazel. She saw what the Japanese were doing to China in a war of ethnic destruction and she wanted to find a way to combat the hated Japanese. Traveling to China, she became an instructor for Chinese men learning to fly but was not allowed to fly combat missions herself. Returning to the United States, she became part of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) and began a demanding life of ferrying aircraft across the United States. The author took on the difficult task of piecing Hazel's short life together since Hazel did not leave much written material behind and, unfortunately, most of those who personally knew her are no longer living. This lack of material has caused a considerable amount of filler to be added but in some instances, this helps to define the time period in which Hazel lived. Her life was cut short in the crash of a Bell P-63 Kingcobra during a ferry flight that was plagued with problems. It is a worthy addition to any WWII aviation library.



HC

YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME



I recently purchased a book titled *Troop Carrier Nose Art in the ETO: 1944-1945* by Hans den Brok through Amazon. This is a subject that has

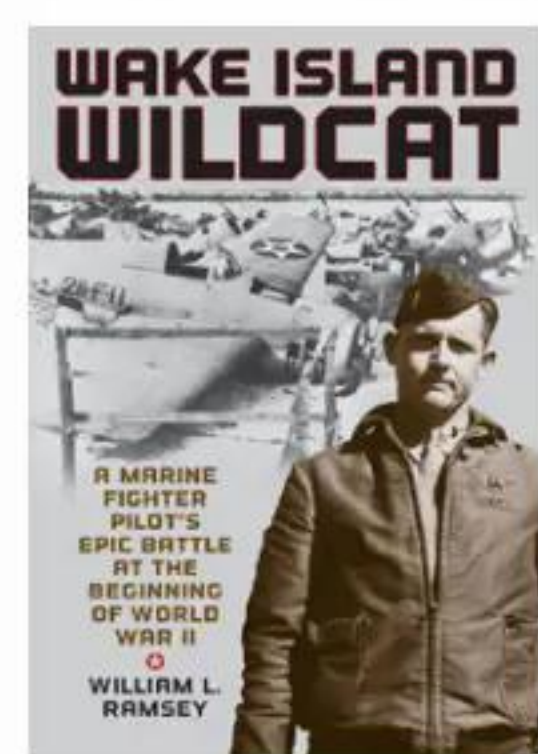
LATEST IN AVIATION LITERATURE

not been overly studied and information on the subject could be quite useful. It is a large paperback of 276 pages costing \$40 but when the book arrived, I was greatly disappointed. The volume was printed through Amazon's Las Vegas facility and is print-on-demand. It is of the lowest quality with terrible paper, terrible layout, and terrible photo reproduction. It is basically a jumble of nose art snapshots (mainly C-47) that have been badly reproduced while the captions lack any real information. There are also a huge number of typos. This book is something to avoid at all costs and readers need to examine any print-on-demand book with a great deal of care before purchase.

ZERO STARS

MOL

RECALLING AN AMERICAN HERO



For those that lived through World War Two, the battle for Wake Island became firmly etched in the American psyche. Today, most people have no realization of the importance of Wake. The miniscule speck in the vast Pacific became a handy stop for Juan Trippe's Pan American Clippers as these pioneering flying boats traveled the complex route from California to China. The US Navy saw the importance of Trippe's route planning and assisted Pan Am in setting up bases and facilities at these remote locations for the Navy was also closely watching Japan's Pacific expansionism.

Literally at the last minute, a squadron of Grumman F4F-3 Wildcats was transported to the horse-shoe shaped Wake Island as contract workers created a runway and other primitive facilities to provide for the men and equipment of VMF-211. Among the pilots was Henry Talmage Elrod and *Wake Island Wildcat* by William L. Ramsey tells his story (Stackpole, ISBN 978-0-8117-7667-7, \$29.95). Elrod had somewhat of a difficult childhood but he grew up with his own sense of honor while also having a wanderlust that would never be completely satisfied until he joined the Marine Corps.

Within the Marines, he found the family that he was always missing.

As an enlisted man, Elrod obeyed orders and worked his way upwards. He always was fascinated by flying but, at the time, pilots needed to have four years of college and Elrod had only two. Still, it seems some of his higher-ups realized his potential and he eventually made it to Officers' Candidate School and from there managed to get through flying school although he had a really tough time and barely got his wings. Elrod was initially assigned to an observation squadron with Vought Corsair biplanes and he learned how to spot artillery and troop concentrations. Probably to his surprise, he was eventually transferred to VMF-211 and the Grumman F3F fighter. Although still a biplane, the F3F had much more performance than the Voughts and Elrod took to his new charge with a great deal of enthusiasm. However, there was yet another new aircraft on the horizon — the monoplane F4F-3 Wildcat, also built by Grumman. The Wildcat was a complete change-over from the lumbering observation biplanes that he was used to flying but the need for new fighters was obvious as the Japanese expanded their militaristic holdings in the Pacific. Transition into the Wildcat was very quick and Elrod, now one of the older pilots in the unit, had to pick up his pace.

It became obvious to American military planners that Wake would be part of Japan's invasion plans and in November 1941, a dozen F4F-3 Wildcats, 13 pilots, and crewmembers from VMF-211 went aboard the USS *Enterprise* for transport to Wake Island. Elrod was among them. On 3 December, the carrier approached Wake and the Wildcats launched to land on a narrow and improvised airstrip. The remaining personnel and the precious few spare parts would be lowered onto boats for transport to the beach. Upon arrival, they found little in the way of facilities but there was a Marine contingent along with civilian contractors, and Pan Am personnel. Together, they worked to put up tents and add defensive weapons to those already installed by the Marine ground

personnel — including vital 3- and 5-inch guns.

Elrod's energy seemed tireless as he worked on the ground with fellow Marines and then began flying patrols over the island. Since they had little in the way of navigational equipment, the pilots tried to keep within eyesight of the island. Then, on 8 December (7 December Hawaiian time) the Japanese struck with a devastating aerial bombardment. Seven of the dozen Wildcats were written off but Marine personnel would do their best to bring a couple of them back to life.

Elrod began flying constant patrols over the island and it came as a surprise to the Japanese that a couple blue-painted American fighters roared into their next bomber formation and destroyed several of their number. From then on, it was a war of attrition. The Japanese attempted a major landing but Elrod, who had learned to fly extremely close to the ground as an observation pilot, took a Wildcat aloft on 11 December and made a dive-bombing attack in the IJN destroyer *Kisaragi*. Pulling up at the last possible second, his two small bombs found their target and hit the destroyer's depth charges, blowing the ship out of the water and killing all 157 of the crew. Previous to this, Marine 6-inch guns on the island hit and sank the enemy ship *Hayate* and these were the first two Japanese warships to be lost in WWII.

Elrod continued his war against the enemy, shooting down several planes until the final Wildcat was wrecked. From that point, he became a ground soldier and organized his men into gun squads that kept defeating the Japanese troops now pouring ashore. On 23 December, Elrod was providing protective fire for some of his men who were moving ammunition to a gun position. A Japanese soldier rose from a pile of dead and shot Elrod with a revolver. Thus, he died with most of his fellow Marines. He would eventually be awarded the Medal of Honor for his destruction of the destroyer.

The author tells Elrod's story in a direct manner and he relies on memories from some of his family members since Elrod is a direct

relative. The story gives us the idea that Elrod was basically unsatisfied with life until he found the Marines and aviation. He always felt badly that he did not complete college since his fellow pilots were all graduates. Also, he sometimes tried too hard to move up in society. A gifted athlete in all sports, after becoming an officer he decided to purchase a polo pony and he quickly became quite good at the sport. However, the polo life is an expensive life and Elrod suffered the humiliation of having the horse repossessed when he could not afford to keep up payments. Some of his higher ups felt that the pilot would sometimes go out of his way to take chances. But that is of course what led him to blow the Japanese destroyer out of the water. Henry T. Elrod was the right man for the time. It is unfortunate that he could not continue his war against the Japanese considering what he accomplished in just a few short days.

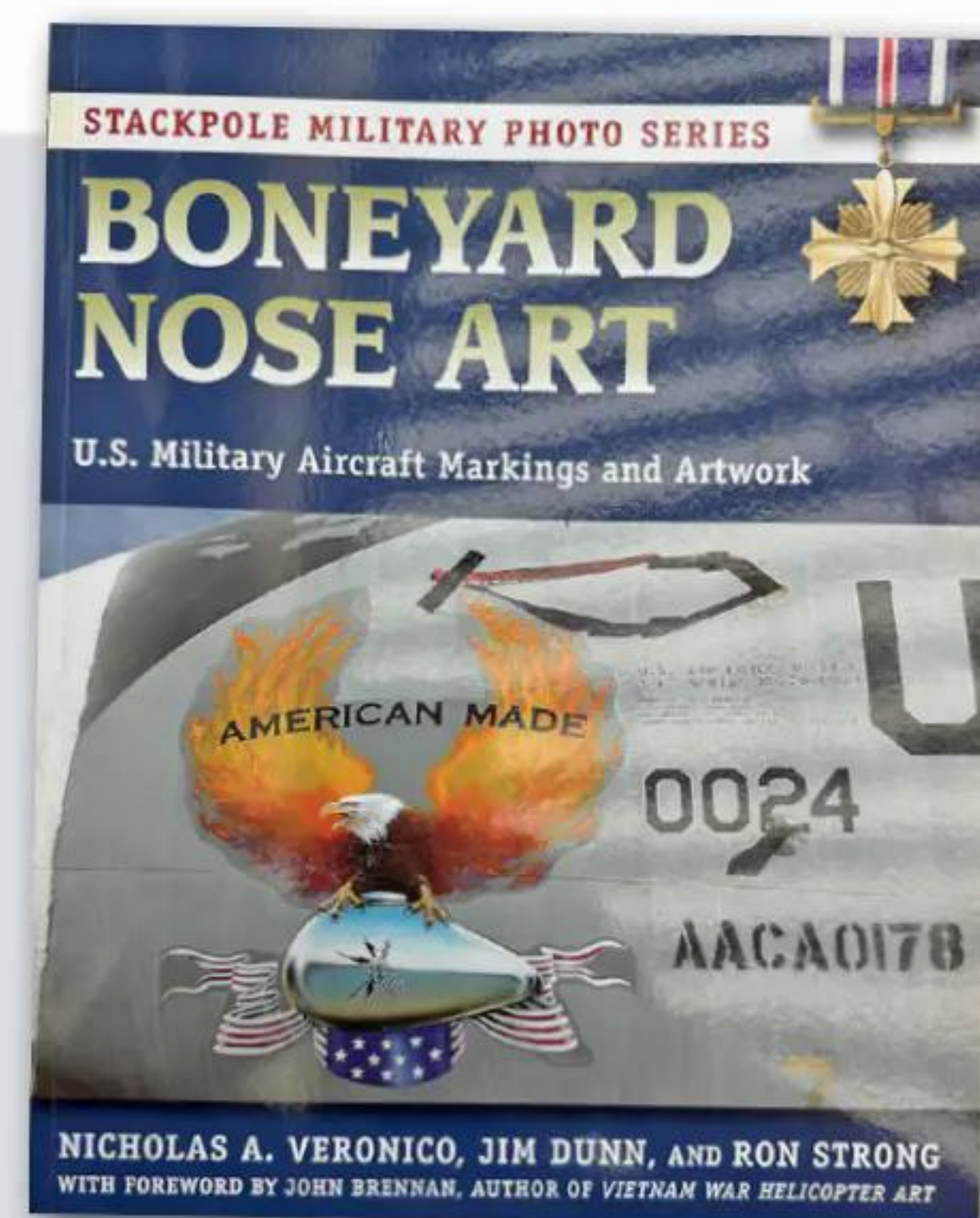
★★★★

MW

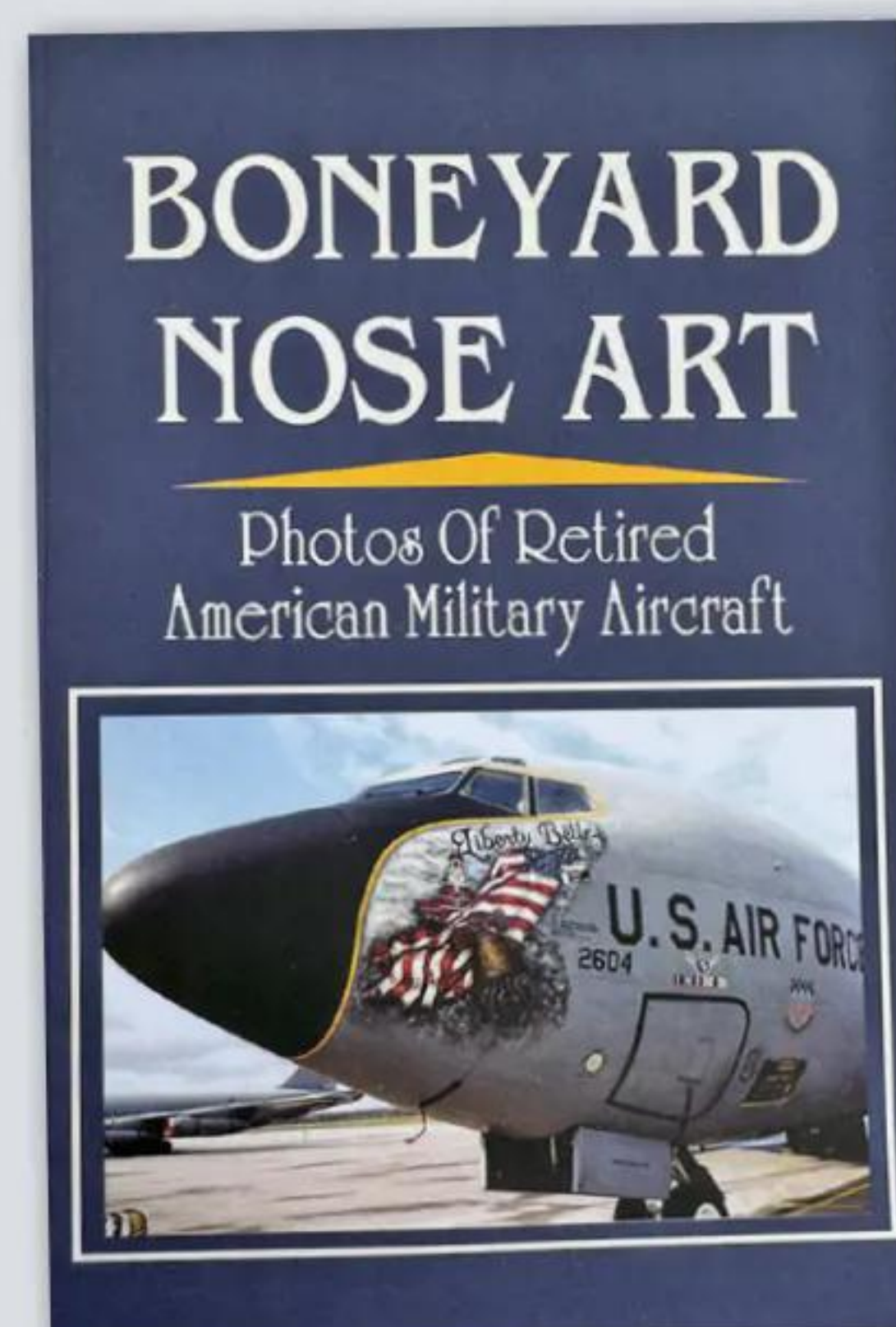
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The world keeps getting stranger and stranger. We were recently informed that the book *Boneyard Nose Art: US Military Aircraft Markings and Artwork* by Nicholas A. Veronico, Jim Dunn, and Ron Strong has been "lifted." So, what do we mean by that? It seems that an unknown publisher and a never-before-published author have scanned the book, added a new cover and new ISBN number (which might be false) and are selling it on *Amazon.com*. The stolen work is printed on very low-grade paper and the reproduction is shameful. China has a long tradition of pirating books, movies, and just about anything else. Is the book from China? We can't find that answer. However, the book is print-on-demand and produced at Amazon's Las Vegas facility. The book was originally published by Stackpole Books on high-quality paper with excellent reproduction. Print-on-demand has become extremely popular in recent years but it usually guarantees a buyer an inferior work with poor reproduction. Is this the start of a trend? Let us know if you have had similar encounters.

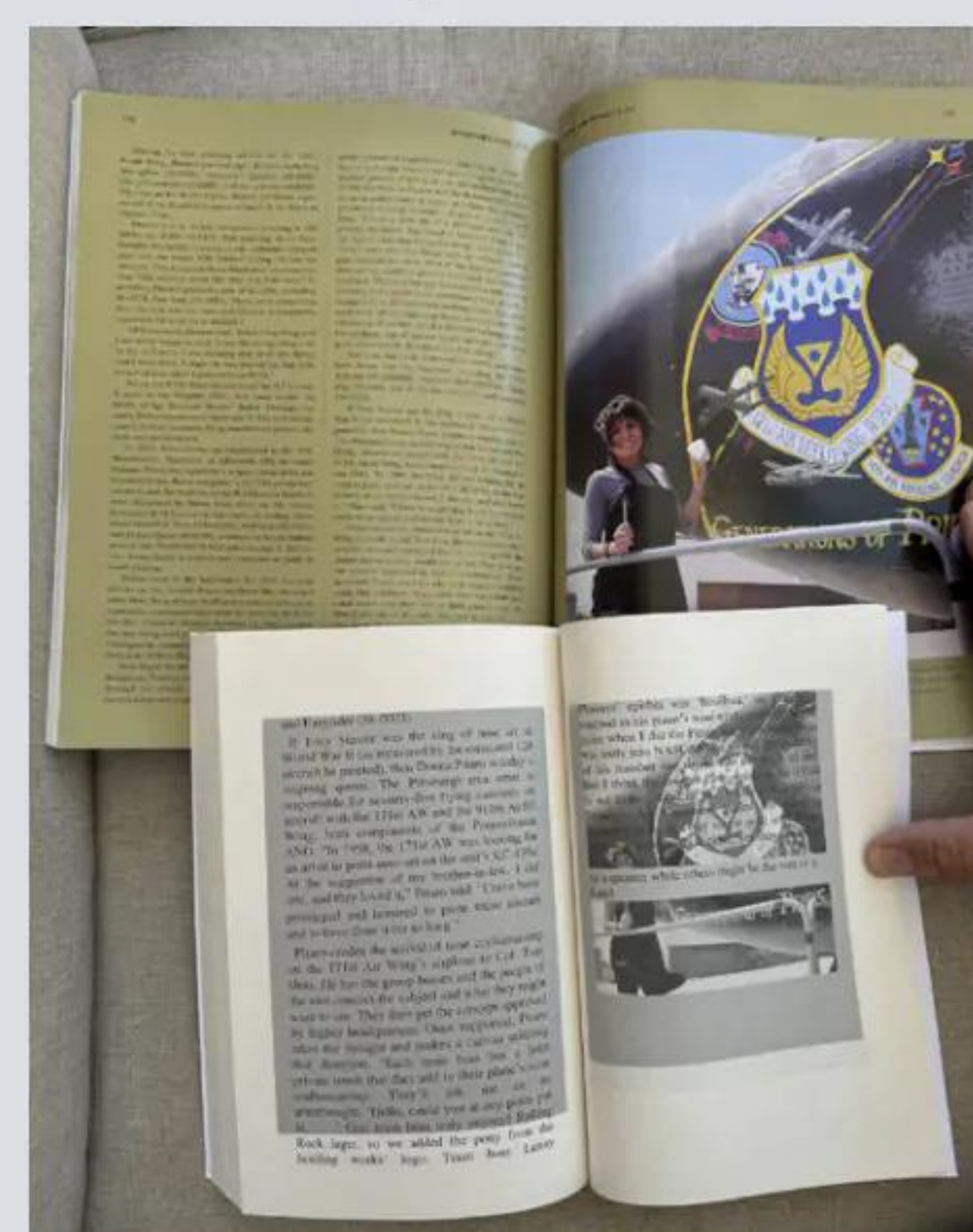
AC



The cover of the real book.



Cover of the pirated version.



Both versions — showing the strangeness of the pirated version with the text printed on top of the photos!

REVIEW RATING SYSTEM

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AIRMASTER BARN FIND

America is a big country with lots of barns, garages, and out buildings. No telling what is in them. For example, entertainer and car collector Jay Leno recently found a near perfect Jaguar XKE that had been in a garage for decades near a Burbank bookstore that he frequents. One of the more recent finds consists of a group of at least four Cessna C-37 Airmasters and associated parts that could certainly use a good home. Starting with the C-34, the Airmaster came about as America recovered from the Great Depression and evolved into the C-37 and C-38. The aircraft has a steel tube fuselage with extensive woodwork along with a wooden wing. Power came from a variety of Warner radial engines. For its time, the Airmaster was a modern general aviation aircraft but after WWII it was quickly replaced by all-metal designs. These aircraft have found an interested party so we may see several of these classics return to the sky.



Airmaster NCI2599 shortly after being rolled out of the factory.



This Airmaster is relatively complete but all will need restoration.



Another of the Airmasters with a wing in the foreground.



Bare Airmaster fuselage.



For its time, the Airmaster was a pioneering aircraft and hopefully these machines will be restored.



Dakota KN451 when it was at the Canadian Aviation Museum. As can be seen, little was being done to preserve the plane.

DAKOTA RESTORED

The Greenwood Military Aviation Museum's Douglas C-47 Dakota has been beautifully restored by the Royal Canadian Air Force's 14th AMS. The plane has been repainted in its original rescue markings and colors. Originally built as USAAF 44-76590, it was transferred to the Royal Air Force on 26 March 1945 and ferried to England in November of that year where it became Dakota IV KN451. It was flown by the RCAF in Europe before being ferried to Canada in April 1946. The plane was then modified for the SAR mission and based at RCAF Dartmouth and RCAF Greenwood in Nova Scotia before being transferred to Sea Island, British Columbia. In 1952, it went to Camp Borden in Ontario as an instructional airframe with the identity 6558. It then went to the Canadian Aviation Museum in Ottawa in August 1964 and sat outside for over two decades. In 2006, it was disassembled and trucked to the Greenwood Military Aviation Museum. The wing box had rotted but this was replaced courtesy of Buffalo Joe of Buffalo Airways.

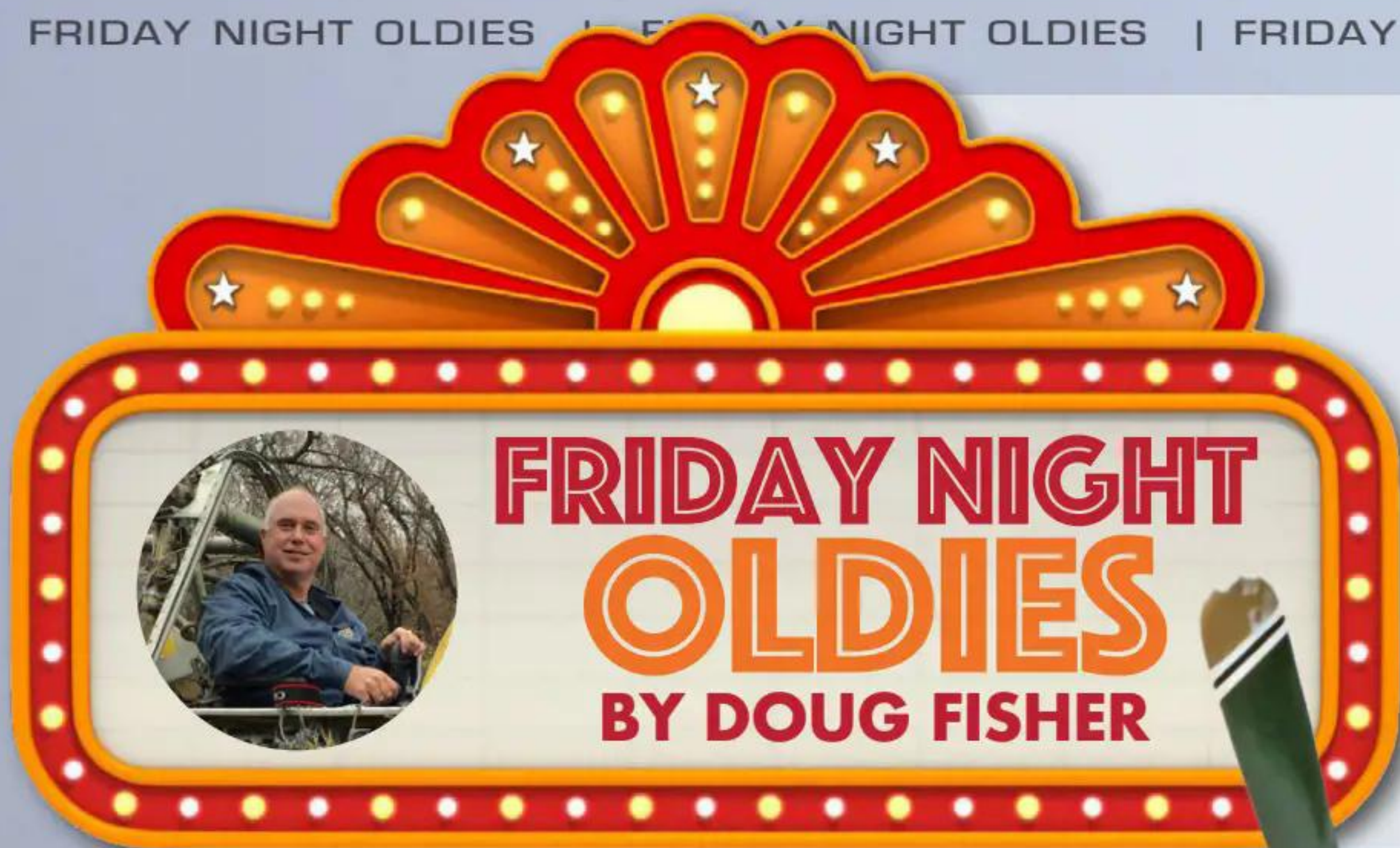


The Dakota after its recent restoration.



KN451 served in the SAR mission and received this bright color scheme.

AC



SURPLUS EX-MILITARY AIRCRAFT LONG BEFORE THEY BECAME MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR RESTORATIONS



The USAF quickly found out that the underpowered North American T-28A Trojan was not for them and buyers soon had their pick of surplus examples. As can be seen, USAF 49-1584 was purchased by Grimes Aircraft Lighting in Urbana, Ohio, placed in the Experimental category (the T-28A was Standard category), and registered N8391H. The Trojan was used as a “flying laboratory” to test the company’s lighting products and was photographed in July 1963. Around this time, representatives from North American were scouring the country seeking civilian examples of the T-28A. They were paying \$10,000 no matter the condition (about \$103,000 in 2024). The reason? These aircraft were being converted to fire-breathing T-28Ds for the war in Southeast Asia. It appears that once it became a T-28D, this aircraft went to the Royal Lao Air Force where it may have been flown by CIA pilots. By the 1990s, the T-28D wound up in Australia where it was restored in Lao markings with the interesting registration VH-CIA.

This simple gold and white scheme with black trim highlights the elegant lines of the North American F-51H — the last production variant of the famed Mustang. Built as USAAF 44-64415 and later flown by NACA as #130 out of Moffett Field in northern California, the Mustang was acquired by William Hogan who flew the H in several attractive schemes. In 1978, it was purchased by Bill and Don Whittington of Florida and finished in RAF camouflage as N49WB Race 8 and Race 94. On 16 September 1978, the aircraft was heavily damaged following a crash-landing during the Reno National Air Races. Repaired, the H was seldom flown and it is now in storage following Bill Whittington's death.



Surplus T-28As often found themselves in bright civilian colors, such as N9106Z USAF 49-1587. However, this was no ordinary A model Trojan. It was a Hamilton T-28R-2 Nomair 200 Executive. That meant the aircraft had gone through a complete rebuild and the original 900-hp engine was replaced with a 1350-hp Wright R-1820-56A radial and a Hamilton Standard three-blade prop. The wing span was increased by seven feet and the interior was modified for a pilot in front and two pairs of seats holding four passengers with a door on the port side. Ten were built, with the first flying during February 1962. At the time, it was advertised as the fastest single-engine Standard category aircraft available in the USA. The plane was eventually reregistered N28DS and it is still active. When photographed in July 1965, the Nomair 200 was being operated by Cincinnati Air Taxi so perhaps it was being used as a high-speed transport.



Carrying the King's Trophy Race 99 on the vertical tail, Supermarine Spitfire T. Mk. VIII G-AIDN was extremely attractive in this overall light blue scheme with the name *R.J. Mitchell* on the nose. Converted into a dual-control trainer from a standard Mk. VIII RAF MT818, this was the only Mk. VIII so converted, the rest being Mk. IX conversions. First flying on 9 September 1946, the aircraft is the only surviving Spitfire prototype and it remains flyable.



The one-and-only Lockheed Air Services Super 26 XB-SIJ was photographed at San Antonio, Texas, during November 1979. Originally built as A-26C-55-DT USAAF 44-25999, the surplus aircraft became N5052N when Lockheed decided to get into the business of converting Invaders to executive aircraft. An all-new pressurized fuselage was built with numerous other modifications but Lockheed found the market overcrowded and the plane remained a prototype.



Finished in an attractive red and white scheme, Stinson L-5 N75115 was originally built as USAAF 42-98627. The L-5 remained active with the post-war USAF and ANG with many being used during the Korean War. From the end of WWII through the 1950s, hundreds of surplus L-5 were sold off by the government and most went to work-a-day projects such as ag spraying and banner towing. Today, the L-5 is a prized Warbird and N75115 is now registered N227BC and remains active in Florida.



Heading to Mexico as XB-SIJ *Koba Wiki*, the Super 26 was grounded at San Antonio with a broken main spar. Eventually, it was purchased by Air Spray of Red Deer, Alberta, Canada, and a crew got the plane into ferriable condition as C-GQPZ. It was flown to Red Deer and picked apart to support the company's fleet of Invader fire-bombers.

AC



TEXAN FROM HAITI

SAVING THE LAST NORTH AMERICAN T-6G FLOWN BY THE HAITIAN AVIATION CORPS
BY LARRY JOHNSON

Seeing the photo of the derelict Cessna O-2 in Haiti on Page 8 of the September *Air Classics* brought back a flood of memories. I started flying Curtiss C-46 Commandos for Air Haiti during August of 1976. Most of our flights were to Port-au-Prince (PAP) in Haiti from Miami. We quite often had several hours in PAP while we waited for the Commando that we were flying to be unloaded and reloaded for the next flight. During these down times, some of the other pilots drove me around looking at the sights in PAP. One place we drove past was the Haitian Avia-

tion Corps base. We couldn't get into the base but I could see some of the airplanes from outside of the fence. One of these was a North American T-6 that belonged to the Haitian Aviation Corps and that caught my interest.

Founded in 1942 with aircraft supplied from the USA, the main mission for the Haitian Aviation Corps was communication and transportation. The unit was headquartered at Bowen Field, a former US Marine Corps base, but operational readiness was basically quite limited. In the early 1950s, the Duvalier government

acquired a small number of P-51D Mustangs to perhaps counter the neighboring Dominican Republic but, like most of the other aircraft the HAC acquired, they went downhill very quickly. Other aircraft purchased included T-28 Fennecs, Cessna O-2s, SIAI-Marchetti S-211s and SF-260s but these machines were also quickly sold off after limited usage. Today, with the country near collapse, the HAC has ceased to exist.

Time went by and when I drove past the base over the years, I saw the AT-6 parked in the same spot. Then, in 1982, I

This is how the author first spotted the T-6G — neglected and parked in the same area for several years without moving.



Larry's regular "ride" at the time — Air Haiti Curtiss C-46 Commando.

learned that their HAC was going to auction off several of their airplanes including the AT-6. I mentioned this to some friends and three of us decided to place a bid on the Texan. It was a sealed bid so we just waited to the auction date to get the results. As it turned out, our bid won.

Now, since I was the only one of the three that was in Haiti quite often, it was up to me to retrieve the plane. Plus, I had an A&P license. I was finally allowed onto the base to get a look at the plane and it turned out to be a T-6G. The G model was a remanufactured Texan and featured a lot of improvements. The aircraft was mostly intact, just neglected. It was missing a battery and an oil cooler but it was extremely hard to get permission to get onto the base and work on the Texan.

I had to get an interpreter to speak with the Haitian military people and there were always guards that followed me around. My interpreter was Baz, a Haitian that was the head mechanic from Air Haiti but he didn't always have to time to go to the base with me due to working his regular job with Air Haiti.

Also, I was limited to when I could go and work on the Texan. I finally got an oil cooler and a new battery installed and it became paramount to get the plane off of the base to PAP airport so that I could work on it any time I was in Haiti. I got the R-1340 running but the engine-driven fuel pump wasn't functioning so the only way I could run it was by using the wobble pump.

I decided to fly it off the base so I got the chief pilot of Air Haiti to sit in the rear seat and use the wobble pump and I



It was obvious the Texan had not flown in some time but it appeared to be in good condition. Getting access to the military base was difficult.



By the time the author found the Texan, Haiti's small force of P-51Ds had disappeared but most would find their way back to the USA.



Several de Havilland Canada Beavers were also scattered around the ramp and they had not operated for a few years.



Air Haiti mechanic Baz (orange flight suit) who was a great help with the project with HAC personnel and the Texan. Note the Beaver and Sikorsky S-55 in the background.



Even though he now owned the aircraft, getting the Texan off the military field was proving difficult.

flew it to PAP with the landing gear down while he pumped the wobble pump the entire time. Fortunately, it was a very short distance away.

Now located at PAP, I was able to do all sorts of work on the plane. I fixed the fuel pump, jacked up the Texan for a retract check of the landing gear, and any other work necessary to fly the Texan to Miami. Part of the deal in buying the aircraft was that I had to remove all the Haitian military markings, so I brought some paint stripper down from MIA and removed all the marks. I got the plane registered in the US and was assigned the N number of N3240N. Another part of the sale was that I couldn't fly the plane in the country of Haiti — not even a test flight! That meant when I took off from PAP, I had to leave the country. The Texan hadn't flown in years except for the short ferry flight that I flew from Bowman Field to PAP.

Finally, I was ready to fly home but all I had was a hand-held radio to talk to the towers and no navigation equipment at all. It was a dead reckoning flight, compass headings only. I had a friend get in the rear seat with a five-man life raft and we both wore Mae Wests. I filed a DVFR flight plan and took off on 7 January 1983 bound for Opa Locka, Florida (Miami). I climbed to 10,500 feet and just past the north coast of Haiti, my friend wiggled the stick. I turned to look at him, as we had no way to communicate, and he was pointing to the right side of the plane. When I looked to the right, there was a Cessna



One of the few operational HAC aircraft at the time was Douglas C-47 1233. One of a dozen operated by the HAC, this aircraft (acquired in 1948) was last seen derelict at Bowen Field.

Citation slightly behind us. We had been intercepted by the Drug Enforcement Agency! Since everything was in order, I just waved at them when the jet pulled up next to us and they finally left.

I decided to land in Georgetown in the Bahamas just to check over everything since there could be a major oil leak on the bottom of the engine and there would be no way I could see it from the cockpit. Everything looked good so I topped off the fuel and took off again — next stop Opa Locka.

Before flying home, one of my partners in the airplane checked with the FAA for a ferry permit. He was told it wasn't necessary until we landed in the US and then we would need one for the ferry flight from Opa Locka to our home airport. He gave the Fed all our information about the flight and he said it would not be a problem. I landed in Opa Locka, logging 5.3 hours for the flight from Haiti.

After clearing customs, I met with my partner and an FAA man to get the ferry permit. Well, the situation had changed! The FAA man was a different individual from the one my partner talked to before the flight. He was anything *but* cooperative. He looked at the plane, which did look a little rough, and started to argue that it didn't look safe to fly. I was getting a little hot too and stated that I had just flown over 700 miles across the Atlantic Ocean and I thought it was safe to fly another 50 miles to our home airport! Well, I lost the argument and he would not give us a ferry permit. We had to come back the next day but this time the FAA



Safely navigating hundreds of miles of open Atlantic Ocean, the Texan makes landfall in Florida.



Cleaned up, stripped, and registered, the T-6G was photographed after the recovered controls were installed. Note how the Haitian markings etched into the aluminum.



Finished in its bright yellow US Navy markings.



The T-6G was eventually traded in on this Traveler 4000.



Currently, the Texan is regularly flying in England and painted in California Air National Guard markings.

man that my partner originally talked to was there and he issued the permit with no problems. I flew the Texan solo to Richards Field in the Redlands, Florida. After getting the plane home, one of the partners wanted out of the deal so two of us bought him out — Ray Fow and myself.

Then the work began. I did a lot of corrosion repair and removed all the controls while another friend recovered all the fabric controls and we had the plane painted after I reinstalled the controls.

After some time, it was looking good again plus it was a very nice flying Texan. It had never been a civilian aircraft and it went from the US Air Force as 49-3209 to the Haitian Air Corps as 3209 and then us. We were the first civilian owners and had to get a conformity inspection from the FAA. And there were problems at that point also because the Fed that came out didn't know much about these machines. However, N3240N was finally done.

After some time, we traded the Texan for a Travelair D-4000 biplane (EDITOR'S NOTE: The aircraft was NC688K and it was a particularly historic machine since it was used in the pivotal aviation movie *The Dawn Patrol*. At the time, NC688K was owned by Moye Stephens who, of course, was profiled by Mark Bingham in his "Log Entries" in the July 2024 — all of this proving, once again, that aviation is a really small world). The Travelair is currently flying in New Zealand. I really enjoyed the T-6! The last time I heard, the plane was exported to the United Kingdom where it is regularly flown as G-DDMV.

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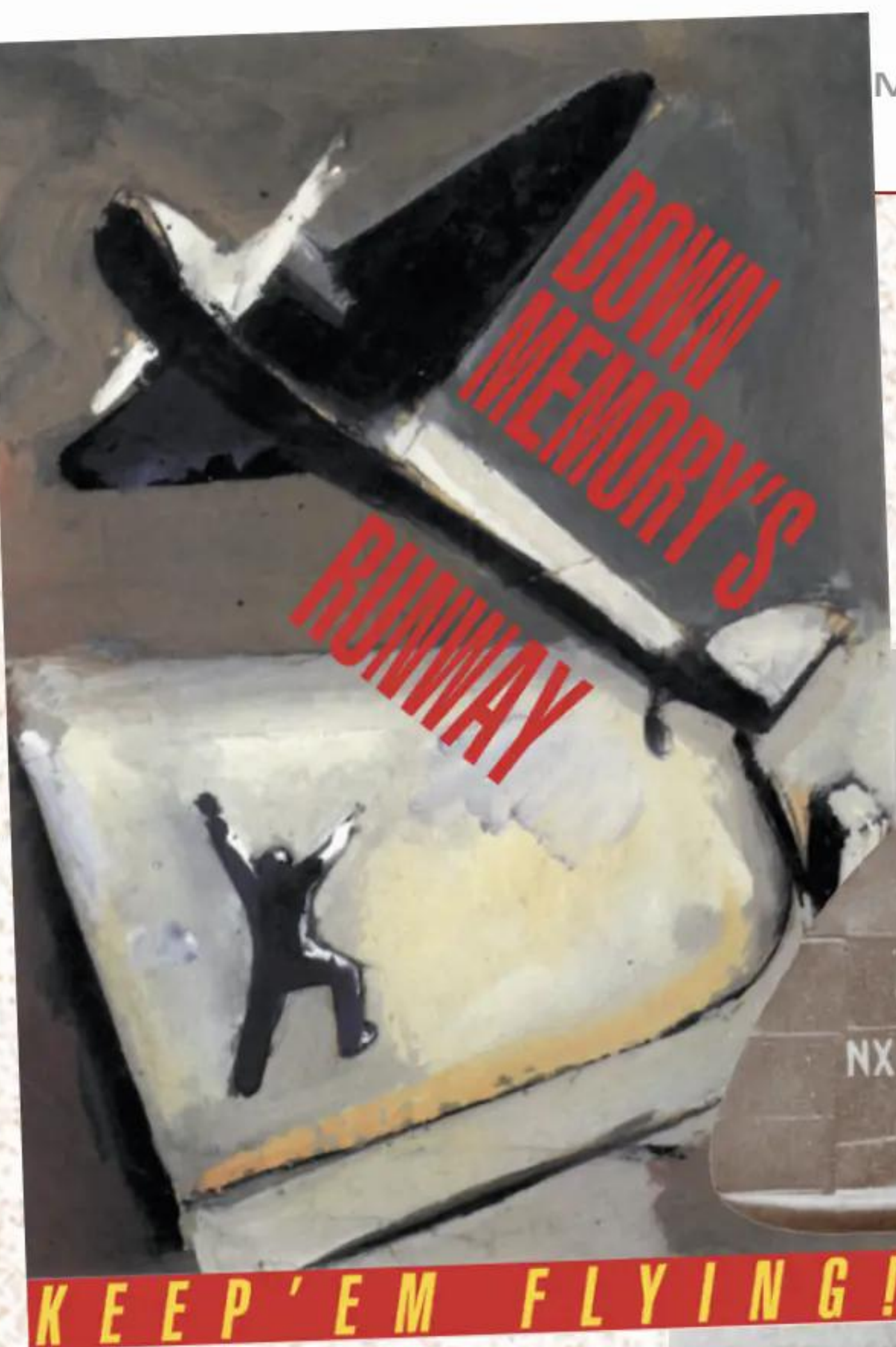
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INTERESTING AND UNUSUAL AMERICAN AIRCRAFT FROM AVIATION'S GLORIOUS PAST BY NORM TAYLOR



After the end of the Second World War, every American aircraft manufacturer knew that

all the returning pilots would want their own personal aircraft. Dozens of designs were put forth to fill this perceived demand and many made it into production while others remained just prototypes. One of the more interesting was the Piper PA-7 Skycoupe.

Powered by a Franklin 4ACG-19-H3 engine of 113-hp, the two passengers sat side-by-side in a futuristic pod. Trouble was, the projected interest for masses of general aviation aircraft never developed and NX4500 remained as a prototype.



Antilles Air Boats was one of several companies that attempted to put the Grumman G-73 Mallard into regular airline service. Operating these aircraft on short flights in and out of salt water was very hard on the airframes and some had extensive corrosion set in. The Mallard was photographed during 1979 at Saint Thomas Harbor seaplane base in the Virgin Islands. Now with a private owner, this Mallard is still active.



The rugged Cessna 180 series is still in demand around the world. Photographed in 1971, this example was operating with the Royal Australian Air Force as A98-063. With the RAAF, the aircraft saw action during the Vietnam War and in 1975 it was sold surplus as VH-TVB.



Far-ranging Rock Island Monarch 26 conversion of a Douglas Invader was photographed at Sydney, Australia, during 1970. Built as A-26C USAAF 44-34390, this Invader would be loaned to France for operation with the *Armee de l'Air* in Indochina. Returned to the USAF at Clark Field in the Philippines, the Invader was purchased by Rock Island for conversion and flown to the States. The Monarch had a short run as an executive transport since the registration was cancelled in 1978 after being used as a drug runner. The plane was reported as abandoned in a dump at Barranquilla, Columbia.



The air force of Argentina utilized North American F-86F Sabres as advanced trainers after being withdrawn from front-line service. Built for the USAF as 52-4974, the aircraft was eventually transferred to Argentina (one of 28 to replace Gloster Meteors). Some sources claimed the Sabres were utilized during the Falklands/Malvinas War but they were not. F-86F C-124 was photographed at Medoza during 1973.



Neat line-up of Vought F4U-4B Corsairs of VMF-214 during one of the unit's two Korean War combat tours. Photographed at Pohang, South Korea, during 1951, the lead Corsair is BuNo 63009.

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Initial markings applied by the Royal Canadian Air Force to the first 30 Mustangs purchased by Canada. At first, they retained the standard USAF "PF" buzz code. NAA P-51D-30-NA Mustang 44-74380 became RCAF 9579. It was written off on 25 January 1953 when it crashed near Vancouver Airport while serving with No. 442 "Caribou" Squadron.



RCAF 9573 wearing the early-style roundel. The Mustang was written off in an accident on 3 July 1951 at Abbotsford, British Columbia. A fuel tank exploded in a hangar, injuring three crewmen.

MUSTANG MUSINGS

I want to comment on some of the Mustangs featured in the August issue of *Air Classics*. Way back when I started to visit Ottawa regularly on business, I also started to visit the Public Archives/ National Archives and also the DND Directorate of History. Among the first civil aircraft files I studied and made research notes on in early 1978 were Mustangs CF-LOQ, CF-LOR, CF-PIO, CF-RUT along with the short-term ferry registrations CF-MWB, CF-MWC, CF-MWM, CF-MWN, etc. These latter registrations were apparently issued for short ferry flights within Canada and several were later reassigned to Harvards and other aircraft.

At that time, these files were only available as the original hard copy paper files and, not long after that, Archivist Carl Vincent had all of the old files microfilmed and the paper files were destroyed for most items except for "historic" aircraft. In more recent years, these microfilm files have become freely available online as microfilm reels.

For some odd reason, some of these files come up as "Page Not Found."



Mustang 44-74376 before application of RCAF code.

Among those is Reel T-7976, which has the files for CF-LOQ and CF-PIO on it. However, I can make comments on CF-LOQ/N130JT from my extensive research notes on this file.

CF-LOR/N130JT had been RCAF 9221. It has served with 402 (Auxiliary) Squadron at Winnipeg, suffered a Category B accident on 22 February 1951 and later served with 403 (Auxiliary) Squadron at Calgary. It was registered to well-known Warbird pilot Lynn Garrison on 26 September 1961. Lynn then sold it to Gerald Wolton of Wolton Lumber Ltd. in Calgary and it was registered to him on 13 March 1965.

On 24 August 1965, Wolton was involved in a near miss with Air Canada Flight 163 at 10,000 feet. The Air Canada aircraft had to take evasive action to maintain adequate separation and Wolton was deemed to have exercised poor airmanship and/or lack of knowledge of the Air Regulations. He was given a warning by Transport Canada.

On 26 April 1966, Wolton sold the Mustang to John Waldrop Temple of Signal Mountain, Tennessee, for \$9500 but the sale was not legally completed until the aircraft arrived in the USA. There is considerable paperwork and hassle in the file over details of the sale, failure to cancel the Canadian

registration and remove the registration from the aircraft, an unauthorized flight in Canada by Temple, etc. Temple did not hold a Canadian license nor was his US license valid for a flight in Canada, nor did he have any other authority from Transport Canada to fly the Mustang in Canada. The Calgary tower advised him that the aircraft was not to be flown until proper authority or license was issued.

On 29 April 1966, the Mustang took off from Calgary on a ferry flight to Great Falls, Montana. Complete electrical and radio failure was experienced shortly after takeoff and

the P-51 landed gear-up on a disused runway at Calgary, despite getting a red flare from the tower. The prop blades were bent back and there was damage to the skin on the scoop and flaps. Transport Canada considered the damage to be insignificant to warrant filing an accident report.

The Accident Notification names Temple as the pilot but there is also reference in the file to it having been flown to Great Falls by Fred Weatherall, a pilot familiar with Mustangs, but perhaps this refers to a later ferry flight following repairs. Eventually, in October 1966, the Canadian registration letters were



Newspaper clipping showing the arrival of the four Mustangs at Vancouver.



George Stewart (fourth from left) with other pilots and the Mustangs for 424 (Fighter) Squadron at Hamilton on 6 November 1950. (G. Stewart)

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removed from the aircraft and it was registered to Temple on 4 November 1966. This registration was revoked on 8 March 1972 due to lack of reporting. Wolton later re-used CF-LOQ for a Cessna 310.

Temple used N130JT as collateral for a bank loan of \$13,144 on 11 March 1968, later repaid in 1973, I do have a copy of the FAA file on N130JR courtesy of the late Mal Gougon.

I am aware of the story that the damaged remains of RCAF

9221 and 9592 were combined to make a “new” N2251D, using a replacement rear fuselage and tail surfaces. The last ownership information I have on N130JT is that was registered on 20 February 1976 to James J. Chernich of Illinois. It was still on the US Civil Aircraft Register in 1996. A Certificate of Airworthiness was issued on 1 January 2016 and cancelled again on 20 March 2018. A registration has again been reserved on 1 January 2024 by Elemental Aviation Limited of Heber City, Utah... but for what?

North American P-51D Mustang RCAF 9294 served at the Air Armament School at Trenton, at No. 1 (Fighter) Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Chatham and No. 403 (F) Squadron at Calgary. Mustangs were used at the OTU for target towing as Vampires couldn't handle the job. The RCAF Record Card shows the Mustang went into Stored Reserve with No. 6 Repair Depot, which could mean it was physically located at either Trenton, Picton, or Dunnville.

There was some confusion on the initial US registration or ferry registration, which I can probably explain. When DeFuria bought most of the ex-RCAF Mustangs, the FAA assigned him several blocks of registrations, such as N63xsT and N65xxD. Numbers I have range from N6300T to N6357T and N6516D to N6526D, but some of those ended up on non-RCAF Mustangs or other aircraft types. The eight Mustangs at Vancouver that were sold to Trans-Florida Aviation were assigned as N9145R to N9152R.

What Ed Fleming told me, relating to the Mustangs stored at Carberry, was that he had a black paint spray bomb and a list of available registrations and he just walked down the line of parked Mustangs and engineless hulks and sprayed on the numbers. The official assignment of registrations to airframes was not sorted out until the paperwork was submitted to the FAA when a buyer was found.

Also, I understand that some aircraft were ferried with a different registration than their final official N-number. It was loose as a goose, and some registrations appear to have been used to ferry more



As can be seen, the Mustangs were delivered to the RCAF in pristine condition. (G. Stewart)

than one Mustang if they were able to get away with it. Several of the group of five Mustangs on the same Sales Order with RCAF 9294 have similar mix-ups in registrations!

I understand from Lynn Garrison in Haiti that some of the early ferried Mustangs he flew to Canastota and Syracuse, New York, carried no ferry registrations at all. The Trans-Florida Mustangs at Vancouver had neatly painting registrations (I photographed them), but most of the others were ferried

with the rough sprayed-on-by-hand registrations over the top of the sprayed-over RCAF markings.

RCAF 9294 was one of 14 Mustangs on a spotter's list at the Canastota, airstrip on 1 July 1959 and was apparently marked as "N6525D" at that time. However, no other Mustang appeared later as N6525D so why the switch?

I don't have copies of the FAA files on N6525D, N6347T, or N554T but do have the file on N36FF/N4151D when it appeared out of El Salvador. Flaherty

Factors imported eight Mustangs from El Salvador in 1974, some of which had totally fake USAAF serial numbers.

Some of the Mustangs that Flaherty brought out of El Salvador came as "kits" of Mustang parts and pieces, not necessarily from the same Mustang. For example, the ex-El Salvador "kit" that Jerry Janes in Vancouver (to become *Cottonmouth*) had a partial USAAF s/n on the vertical fin that matched no known Warbird P-51 but the s/n on the paperwork was for a P-51C! Later, I was

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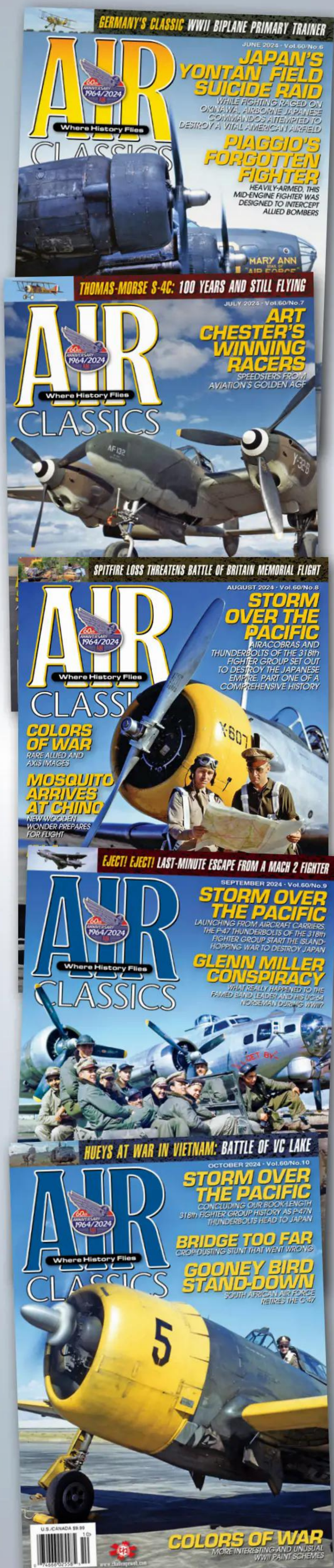
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able to identify the fuselage as RCAF 9281 from RCAF overhaul tags located internally.

N36FF was sold to John Herlihy on 12 March 1975 and then resold to Gordon Plasket on 24 June that year. Gordon re-registered the plane as N4151D and converted it to a full TF-51D dual control configuration. It was one of several Mustangs that I photographed in Bruce Goessling's Unlimited Aircraft Limited hangar at Chino during 1977. At that time, it had been fitted with the repaired yellow wing from RCAF 9243/N6519D that had been damaged in Steve Hinton's forced landing on a 4 August 1974 ferry flight while on loan to Bob Hoover.

I have no details on the more recent history and demise of this Mustang apart from what I have read in *Air Classics*. It has been suggested that something was recovered from the water and that is the basis of the currently registered N4151D.

The original Canadian deal for Mustangs involved only 30 aircraft. This was to cover the needs of one small squadron (No. 417) along with two or three for experimental work and training, and the bulk of them for attrition. In fact, several were broken up for spares since the RCAF was too cheap to purchase spare parts. As far as I can tell, all 30 came from Olmstead AFB at Middletown, Pennsylvania. Apart from the first two aircraft, the other 28 P-51s all have a RCAF "Taken on Strength" date of 7 June 1947 but this is simply a paperwork date, probably not the physical date they arrived in Canada. Most were assigned to RCAF Station Gimli, Manitoba, and within a few weeks several were reassigned to the Canadian Joint Training School at Rivers, Manitoba, for 417 Squadron.

The additional 100 Mustangs were delivered in late 1950 and into 1951 and came from places like TEMCO at Dallas, Pacific Airmotive in Burbank, and Grand Central Aircraft in Glendale. The aircraft arrived in full stars and bars USAF markings with "FF" buzz codes.

I certainly have memories of the first four Mustangs arriving for 442 (Auxiliary) Squadron arriving at Vancouver in late June 1950. They flew

up from California via Great Falls and Calgary. Forewarned by the media that they were coming, I pedaled my bike out to watch them arrive. Sadly, I was years away from owning a camera. At 15, I was still two years away from being old enough to join the RCAF Auxiliary as an airman, where I worked on Mustangs and Vampires.

Jerry Vernon
Via email

BOZO REPORT

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed seeing you skewer one of the biggest jackasses I have ever known — Bozo 1. I first ran into Bozo 1 (I'll abbreviate as B.1) at Griffin, Georgia, where my buddy and later business partner Ron Alexander was running Alexander Aeroplane, a parts supplier competing with Aircraft Spruce. Ron and I wound up restoring and flying his DC-3 some 35 years ago at Griffin.

Unhappily, B.1 decided to do the same thing. We had hoped that with two DC-3s on the field we could swap parts and help each other. Instead, B.1 became not only non-cooperative but most confrontational with Ron. Now, Ron Alexander was one of the nicest guys in the world. If you couldn't get along with Ron then you were probably an asshole. I won't bore you with the details, but B.1 became the butt of all jokes in our little world at Griffin.

As you may know, on one occasion B.1 was arrested for trying to run down a police officer at Griffin Spaulding Airport with his DC-3 after a confrontation over traffic tickets. This put B.1 in jail and had him suspended from Delta Air Lines where we all worked at the time. B.1 then became the self-styled expert on all things Douglas. The rest of us who were flying both Ron's airplane as well as the restored Delta DC-3 were chopped liver.

These days, it curdles my milk to see his YouTube videos on both flying the DC-3 and his "accident investigation" crap. Good on you to keep us up-to-date on these ego-driven "experts."

Jon Goldenbaum
Flabob Airport, CA

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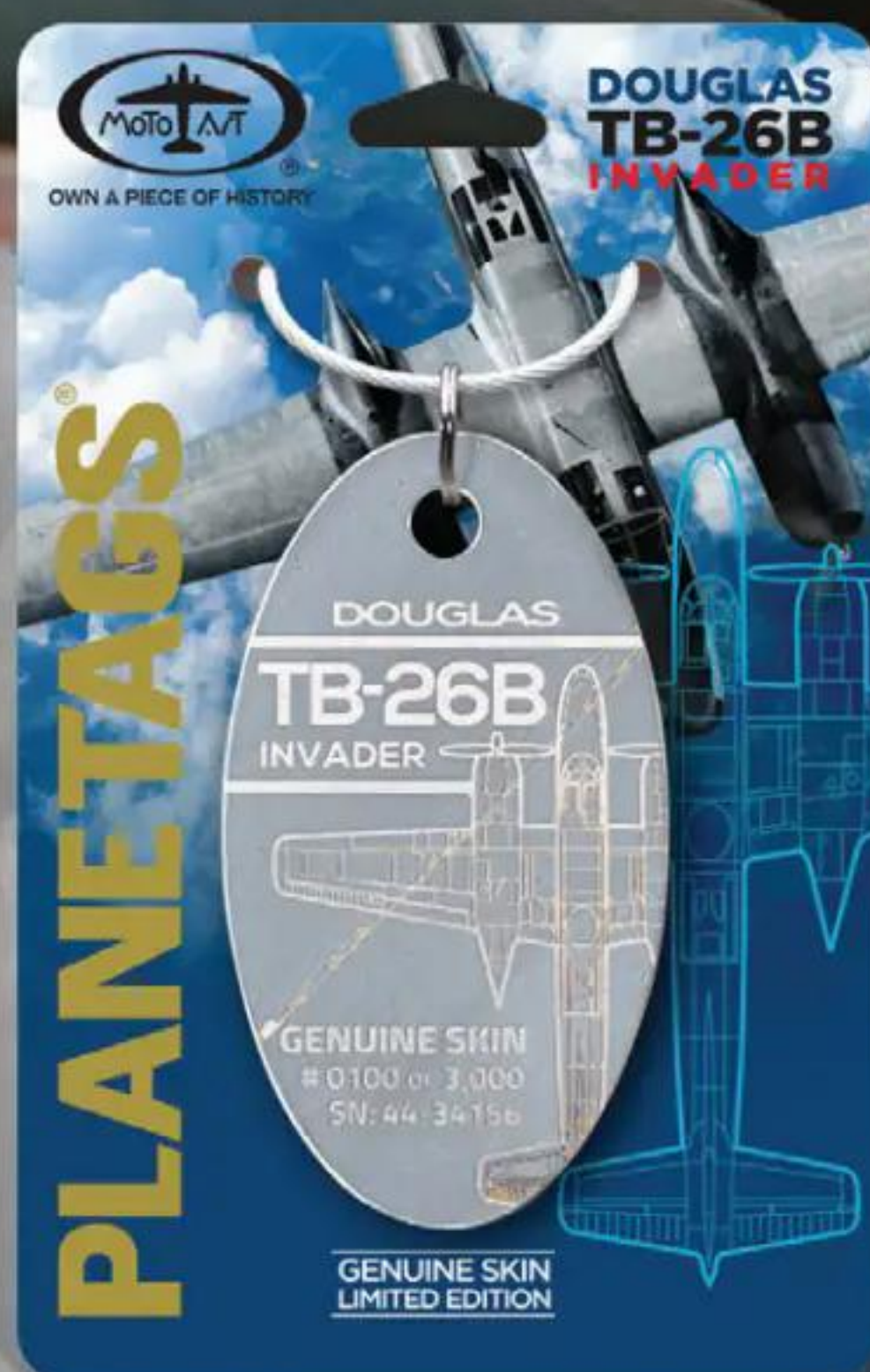
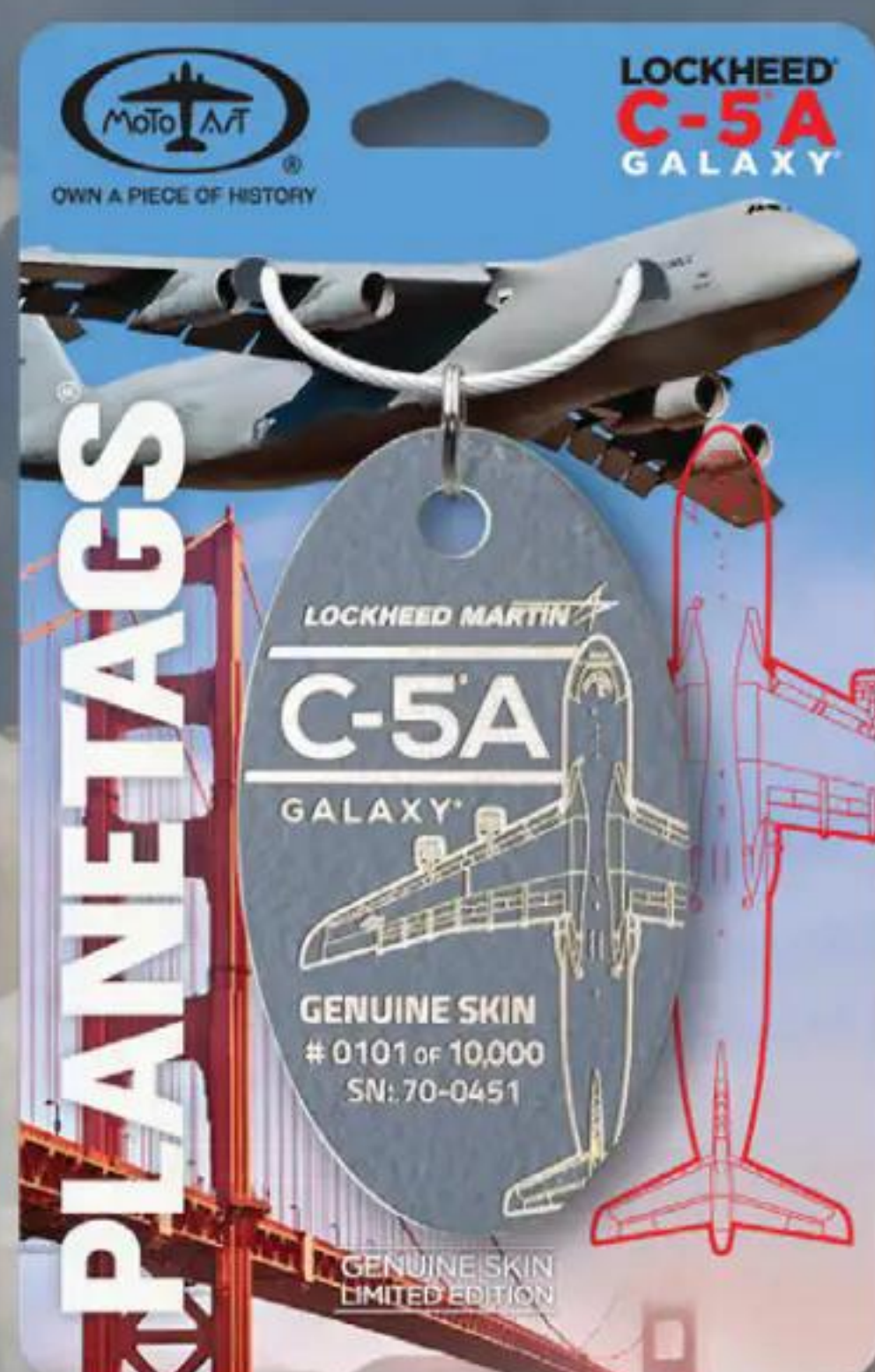
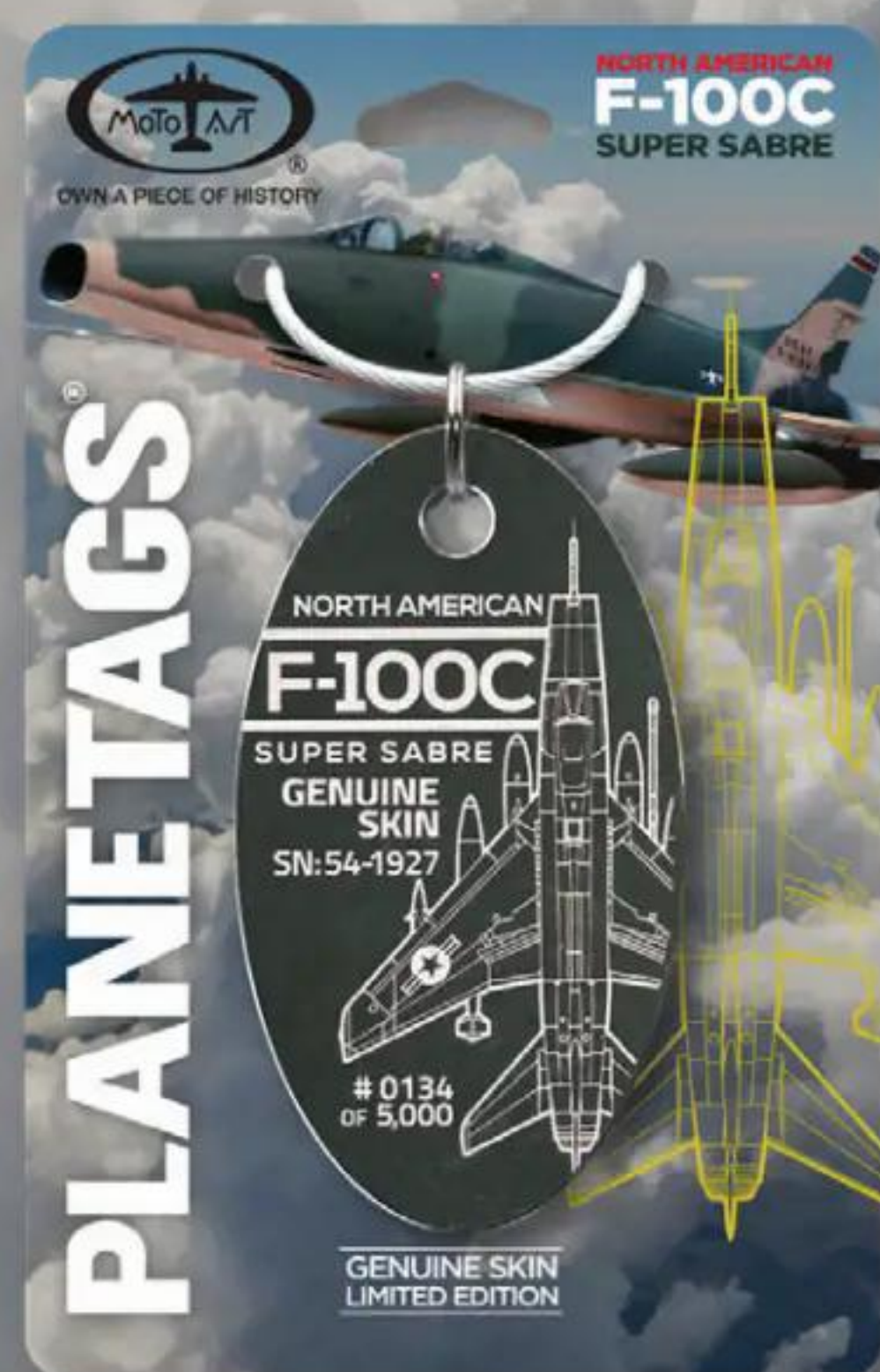


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